de Balzac

H. DE BALZAC

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# COMÉDIE HUMAINE

*Edited by*

GEORGE SAINTSBURY



H. DE BALZAC

# URSULE MIROUËT

*Translated by*

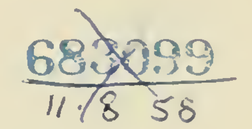
CLARA BELL

*with a Preface by*

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# LIST OF ETCHINGS



*Drawn and Etched by D. Murray-Smith.*

# PREFACE

'Ursule Mirouët,' dedicated by Balzac to his niece Sophie Surville, and avowedly written 'in the fear of the young person,' or, as the author more elegantly puts it, in 'uncompromising respect of the noble principles of a pious education,' exposes itself by the very fact to two different sorts of prejudice. It is sure to be cried up by one set of judges as 'wholesome,' and to be cried down by another as 'goody.'

The latter charge is certainly unfair, for Balzac has by no means written the book in rose-pink and sky-blue only, nor has he been afraid to show things more or less as they are. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to admit that evidences of restraint and convention do exist. Ursule—even more than Eugénie, who becomes a person on at least two occasions, her struggle with her father, and her *revanche* over her cousin—is a thing of shreds and patches, an ideal being in whom that mysterious 'candour,' to which the French attach such excessive value in a girl, and which they make such haste to do away with altogether in a woman, seems to shut out all positive individuality. She is very nice; but she is not very human.

Nor can the machinery of dreams, hypnotism, Swedenborgianism, and what not, which Balzac, following out one of his well-known manias, chose to work into the book, be said to add very largely to its verisimilitude.

It contrasts too sharply with the extremely prosaic, if not always very probable, details of Minoret-Levrault's theft of the will, and of the jealousy of the heirs, which it is interesting to contrast with Dickens's management of the same subject in *Great Expectations*. How far this combination is artistically possible or advisable is a question of abstract criticism into which we need not enter. I think it does not require much argument to prove that Balzac has not, as a matter of fact, quite shown the possibility or the desirableness here. I do not know in the work of a man of genius a more striking instance of the wisdom of the principle, *Nec Deus intersit*, to which, in our day, Horace would certainly have given the form, 'Keep the supernatural in fiction out, unless you can't manage with the natural.'

However, even this may be a question of opinion; and it is at least worth while to point out that in this book Balzac has anticipated, very curiously and interestingly, a large class of English fiction of a later day, which, in its turn, has been imitated in France. The whole scheme, indeed, of *Ursule Mirouët*, by no means owing only to its respect of the young person, though doubtless partly owing to this, is far more that of an English novel than of a French. The absence of the usual 'triangle,' and of all courtship of married women, together with the difficulty (which a Frenchman even now, to some extent, experiences, and experienced much more in Balzac's days), of making very much of 'honest' love-scenes between man and maid, put Balzac's always fertile invention upon hunting out and setting to work other sources of interest, which, with the possible exception of the dream-and-vision part of the book, he has, as a rule, engineered very happily. Even

the love affair between Ursule and Savinien de Portenduère is not to be contemptuously spoken of; and the figure of Savinien is very pleasantly touched. It is to be noted that even Balzac's favourite heroes of unprincipled convention—Marsay, Rastignac, and the rest—exhibit themselves less theatrically in their dealings with the youthful Vicomte than in almost any other of their numerous appearances. Marsay's theory of debt may be amusingly and advantageously contrasted with the opposite, but in a certain sense complementary, remarks of George Warrington on the same subject in *Pendennis.* Madame de Portenduère, too, is good, and not overdone.

On the cabals against Ursule opinions may perhaps differ. It is not easy to say that anything is improbable in the case of a stupid malefactor like Minoret-Levrault; and *odisse quem læseris* is an eternal verity. Still, one would rather have been inclined to suppose that the postmaster, having been so completely successful in his theft, would instinctively feel that it was wiser to let Ursule alone. The malignity of Goupil, too, seems a little overdone, and the whole character of this agreeable lawyer's clerk again presents *mutatis mutandis* something of the eccentric extravagance of Dickens, between whom and Balzac the parallel is perpetually fascinating, because of its constant intermixture of likenesses and contrasts.

But the comic personages generally must be said to be very good. They are not overdone, as the great English novelist just referred to would probably have overdone them; indeed, Balzac has been distinctly sober and sparing in the delineation of their 'humours.' Dickens

certainly, and most English novelists probably, would have been tempted to bring much more to the front poor Madame Crémière's linguistic peculiarities. These will remind everybody of Mrs. Malaprop, though they are more like a historical but much less famous example, the 'Lingo Grande,' which Southey in divers letters to Grosvenor Bedford puts into the mouth of his sister-in-law Mrs. Coleridge. The doctor, the magistrate, the *curé*, the *procureur du roi*, and all the powers that be play their parts well, and more than a mere good word is deserved by Désiré Minoret, to whom Balzac has been rather cruel.

The doctor himself is a more problematical character. His conversion smacks a little of the stage; and it certainly might seem that such an experienced personage, well aware of the ferocity of the fortune-hunters who surrounded him, would have taken rather more pains to put the future of Ursule out of danger by lodging a duplicate will somewhere, or availing himself of some of the devices in which French law, even under the Code Napoleón, is nearly as fertile as English. But the testamentary unreason of mankind is a sufficiently well-authenticated fact to justify Balzac.

Altogether, the book, if not exactly in the first-class for power, takes high rank for variety of interest and for the peculiar character of its scheme. It has no duplicate in its author's work, and we could not spare it. *Ursule Mirouët* first appeared in a newspaper, *Le Messager*, in the issues of August 25 to September 23 inclusive; and when next year it was published in two volumes by Souverain, it had, as it had in the periodical,

twenty-one chapters with headings. Yet another year, and it lost these chapters, and all divisions except the two part-headings of 'Les Héritiers Alarmés' and 'La Succession Minoret,' and took place in the third edition of the *Scènes de La Vie de Province* and the first of the *Comédie* generally.

G. S.

# URSULE MIROUËT

*To Mademoiselle Sophie Surville.*

*It is a real pleasure, my dear niece, to dedicate to you a book of which the subject and the details have gained the approbation—so difficult to secure—of a young girl to whom the world is as yet unknown, and who will make no compromise with the high principles derived from a pious education. You young girls are a public to be dreaded; you ought never to be suffered to read any book less pure than your own pure souls, and you are forbidden certain books, just as you are not allowed to see society as it really is. Is it not enough, then, to make a writer proud, to know that he has satisfied you? Heaven grant that affection may not have misled you! Who can say? The future only, which you, I hope, will see, though he may not, who is your uncle*

*De Balzac.*

## PART I

### THE HEIRS IN ALARM

As you enter Nemours coming from Paris, you cross the canal of the Loing, whose banks form a rural rampart to the pretty little town, and afford many picturesque walks. Since 1830, unfortunately, many houses have been built

beyond the bridge. If this suburb increases, the aspect of the town will lose much of its attractive originality.

But in 1829 the country on each side of the road lay open, and the postmaster, a tall, burly man of about sixty, as he sat on the highest point of the bridge one fine morning, could command a view of what he would have called a ribbon-road.

The month of September was lavishing its wealth. The atmosphere quivered with heat above the grass and stones, not a cloud flecked the ethereal blue, of which the vivid transparency was uniform to the very horizon, showing the extreme rarity of the air. Indeed, Minoret-Levrault, the postmaster in question, was obliged to shade his eyes with his hand not to be quite dazzled. Out of patience with waiting, he looked now at the lovely meadows spreading away to the right, where his after-crop was growing apace, and now at the densely wooded hills to the left, stretching from Nemours to Bouron. And in the valley of the Loing, where the noises on the road came back echoed from the hill, he could hear the gallop of his own horses, and the cracking of his postillions' whips.

Could any one but a postmaster get out of patience with gazing at a field full of cattle, such as Paul Potter painted, under a sky worthy of Raphael, by a canal overhung with trees, like a picture by Hobbema? Any one who knows Nemours, knows that nature there is as beautiful as art, whose mission it is to spiritualise nature; the landscape there has ideas, and suggests thoughts.

Still, on seeing Minoret-Levrault, an artist would have left his place to sketch this country townsman; he was so original by sheer force of being common. Combine all the characteristics of the brute and you get Caliban, who certainly is a great creation. Where matter pre-inates, sentiment ends. The postmaster, a living proof of this axiom, had one of those countenances in which the student finds it hard to discern the soul

through the violent purple hues of the coarsely developed flesh. His little gored blue cap with a peak, fitted closely to a head so huge as to prove that Gall's science of phrenology has not yet dealt with the exceptions to his rules. The shining grey hair, which formed a fringe to the cap, showed that white hairs may be the result of other causes than overworked brains or severe grief. His large ears were almost bursting round the edges from the fulness of too abundant blood, which seemed ready to spurt out after the smallest exertion. His complexion showed purple blotches under a brown pigment, the result of constant exposure to the sun. His grey eyes, restless and deep set, hidden under two black bushes of eyebrow, were like the eyes of the Kalmucks seen in Paris in 1815; if they glistened now and then, it could only be under the influence of a covetous idea. His nose, squat at the base, took a sudden turn up like the foot of a kettle. Thick lips harmonised with an almost disgusting double chin, rough with the stubble of a beard shaved scarcely twice a week, which rubbed a dirty necktie into a state of worn string; a very short neck, in rolls of fat, and puffy cheeks, completed this image of stupid strength, such as sculptors give to their caryatides. Minoret-Levrault was like one of those statues, with the difference that they support something, while he had enough to do to support himself.

You will meet with many an Atlas like him. The man's torso was a huge block, a bull standing on his hind legs. Powerful arms terminated in thick, hard hands, broad and strong, apt at wielding the whip, the reins, and the pitchfork, hands which were no joke in the eyes of his postillions. The enormous stomach of this giant rested on legs as thick as the body of a full-grown man, and feet like an elephant's. Rage was no doubt rare in this man, but when it broke out it would be terrible, apoplectic. Though he was violent and incapable of reflection, the man had done nothing to justify the

sinister threats of his appearance. When any one trembled before the giant, his post-boys would say, 'Oh, he is not a bad fellow!'

The 'Master' of Nemours, to make use of an abbreviation common in many countries, wore a shooting jacket of bottle-green velveteen, trousers of striped green duck, and a vast yellow mohair waistcoat. In the waistcoat pocket an enormous snuff-box was evident, outlined by a black ring. That a snub nose argues a big snuff-box is a rule almost without exception.

Minoret-Levrault, as a son of the Revolution, and a spectator of the Empire, had never concerned himself with politics; as to his religious opinions, he had never set foot in a church but to be married; as to his principles in domestic life, they were contained in the Civil Code. He thought everything permissible that was not forbidden or indictable by law. He had never read anything but the local newspaper and some manuals relating to his business. He was regarded as a skilful agriculturist, but his knowledge was purely empirical.

In Minoret-Levrault, then, the mind did not give the lie to the body. He spoke rarely, and before delivering himself he always took a pinch of snuff to gain time to find, not ideas, but words. If he had been talkative, he would have seemed a failure.

When you think that this sort of elephant, without a trunk and without intelligence, was called Minoret-Levrault, must you not recognise, with Sterne, the occult power of names, which sometimes mask and sometimes label the character of their owners? In spite of these conspicuous disadvantages, in thirty-six years, the Revolution helping, he had made a fortune of thirty thousand francs a year, in meadow land, arable land, and woods.

Though Minoret, who had shares in the Nemours Messageries Company, and an interest in the Gatinais Company at Paris, was still hard at work, it was not so much from habit as for the sake of his only son, or whom

he wished to prepare handsome prospects. This son, who, in the peasants' phraseology, had become a gentleman, had just ended his studies for the law, and on the reopening of the courts was to be sworn as a qualified attorney. Monsieur and Madame Minoret-Levrault—for behind the colossus a woman is evident, a wife, without whom such a fortune would have been impossible—had left their son free to choose his career, as a notary at Paris, as public prosecutor in some country town, as receiver-general, stockbroker, or postmaster. What fancy might he not allow himself, to what profession might he not aspire, as the son of a man of whom it was said from Montargis to Essonne, 'Father Minoret does not know how much he has'?

This idea had received fresh confirmation when, four years since, after selling his inn, Minoret built himself a splendid house and stables, and removed the posting business from the High Street to the riverside. The new buildings had cost two hundred thousand francs, which gossip doubled for thirty miles round. The posting-stage at Nemours required a great number of horses; it worked as far as Fontainebleau on the Paris side, and beyond the roads to Montargis and Montereau; the relays were long, and the sandy soil about Montargis justified the imaginary third horse, which is always paid for and never seen. A man of Minoret's build, and of Minoret's wealth, at the head of such a concern, might well be called without abuse of words the Master of Nemours. Though he never gave a thought to God or the Devil, and was a practical materialist—as he was a practical agriculturist, a practical egoist, a practical miser—Minoret had hitherto enjoyed unmixed happiness, if a merely material existence may be regarded as happy. On seeing the pad of flesh which covered the man's top vertebræ and pressed on his occiput, and especially on hearing his shrill, thin voice, which contrasted ludicrously

with his bull-neck, a physiologist would have understood at once why this great, coarse, burly countryman adored his only son, and perhaps why he had so long awaited his birth—as the name given to the child, Désiré, sufficiently indicated. In short, if love, as betraying a rich physical nature, is the promise of great things in a man, philosophers will understand the causes of Minoret's failure.

His wife, whom the son happily resembled, vied with his father in spoiling the boy. No child's nature could hold out against such idolatry. And, indeed, Désiré, who knew the extent of his power, was clever enough to draw on his mother's savings-box and dip his hand in his father's purse, making each of his fond parents believe that he had not applied to the other. Désiré, who played at Nemours a far more grateful part than that of a prince in his father's capital, had indulged all his fancies at Paris just as he did in his little native town, and had spent more than twelve thousand francs a year. But then, for this money, he had acquired ideas which would never have come into his head at Nemours; he had cast his provincial skin, he had learned the power of money, and had seen that the legal profession was a means of rising in the world. During the last year he had spent ten thousand francs more by forming intimacies with artists, journalists, and their mistresses.

A somewhat alarming confidential letter might have accounted, in case of need, for the postmaster's anxious lookout, a letter in which his son asked his sanction for a marriage; but Madame Minoret-Levrault, fully occupied in preparing a sumptuous meal in honour of the success and the return of the fully-fledged lawyer, had sent her husband out on the road, desiring him to ride forward if he saw no signs of the diligence. The diligence by which this only son was to arrive usually reached Nemours at about five in the morning, and it was now striking nine! What could cause such a delay? Had

there been an upset? Was Désiré alive? Had he even broken a leg?

Three volleys of cracking whips rattle out, rending the air like the report of firearms; the red waistcoats of the post-boys are just in sight, ten horses neigh at once! The master takes off his cap and waves it; and he is seen. The best mounted of the postillions, who is returning with two dappled grey post-horses, touches up the beast he is riding, outstripping five sturdy diligence horses, and the Minorets of the stable, three carriage horses, and comes up to the master.

'Have you seen the "Ducler"?'

On the high roads all the coaches have names—fantastical enough: they are spoken of as the 'Caillard,' the 'Ducler' (the diligence between Nemours and Paris), the 'Grand-Bureau.' Every new company's coach is the 'Rival.' At the time when the Lecomtes ran coaches, their vehicles were known as the 'Comtesses.'

'The "Caillard" did not overtake the "Comtesse," but the "Grand-Bureau" caught her skirts, anyhow!—The "Caillard" and the "Grand-Bureau" have done for the "Françaises"'—the coaches of the Messageries Françaises or royal mails. If you see a post-boy going fit to split, and refusing a glass of wine, question the guard; he will cock his nose and stare into space, and reply, 'The Rival is ahead!' 'And we cannot even see her!' adds the postillion. 'The wretch! he has not given his passengers time to eat!' 'As if he had any!' retorts the guard. 'Whip up Polignac!' All the worst horses are called Polignac. These are the standing jokes and subjects of conversation between the postillions and the guards at the top of the coaches. In France every profession has its own slang.

'Did you see inside the "Ducler"?'

'Monsieur Désiré?' says the postillion, interrupting his master. 'Why, you must have heard us! Our whips gave due notice of her. We made sure you would be on the road.'

'Why is the diligence four hours late?'

'The tire of one of the wheels came off between Essonne and Ponthierry. But there was no accident; Cabirolle fortunately discovered it as we were going up the hill.'

At this instant a woman in her Sunday best—for the bells of all the churches of Nemours were summoning the inhabitants to mid-day mass—a woman of about six-and-thirty, addressed the postmaster.

'Well, cousin,' said she, 'you would not believe me! Our uncle is in the High Street with Ursule, and they are going to mass.'

In spite of the license of modern romance in the matter of local colouring, it is impossible to carry realism so far as to repeat the horrible abuse, mingled with oaths, which this news, so undramatic as it would seem, brought from the wide mouth of Minoret-Levrault; his thin voice became a hiss, and his face had the appearance which the country folk ingeniously refer to as 'sunstroke.'

'Are you certain?' he asked after his first explosion of rage.

The postillions as they went by touched three hats to the master, who seemed neither to see nor hear them. Instead of waiting for his son, Minoret-Levrault returned up the High Street with his cousin.

'Did I not always tell you so?' she went on. 'When Doctor Minoret has fallen into his dotage, that sanctimonious little slut will make a bigot of him; and as those who rule the mind rule the purse, she will get all our money.'

'But, Madame Massin,' said the postmaster, quite confounded.

'Oh yes!' cried Madame Massin, interrupting her cousin, 'you will say as Massin does: "Is a girl of fifteen likely to invent and execute such a plot? To make a man of eighty-three, who never set foot in a church excepting to be married, give up all his opinions?—A

man who has such a horror of priests that he did not even go to the parish church with the child the day of her first communion." But, I say, if Doctor Minoret has such a horror of priests, why, for the last fifteen years, has he spent almost every evening of the week with the Abbé Chaperon? The old hypocrite never fails to give Ursule twenty francs to pay for a taper when she presents the wafer for the mass. Why, do you not remember the gift Ursule made to the Church as a thank-offering to the curé for having prepared her for her first communion? She spent all her money on it, and her godfather gave it back to her doubled. You men pay no heed to anything! When I heard all these details: "Put away your baskets," said I; "the grapes are not for you!" A rich uncle does not behave in that way to a little hussy he has picked out of the gutter unless he means something by it.'

'Pooh! cousin,' replied the postmaster, 'the good man is escorting her as far as the church by mere chance. It is a fine day, and he is going to take a walk.'

'I tell you, cousin, our uncle has a prayer-book in his hand; and he looks that smug! However, you will see!'

'They have been playing a very sly game,' observed the burly postmaster, 'for old Bougival told me that there never was any religious discussion between the doctor and the Abbé Chaperon. Besides, the vicar of Nemours is the best man on earth; he would give his last shirt to a beggar; he is incapable of a mean action, and to filch an inheritance is a——'

'It is robbery!' said Madame Massin.

'It is worse!' cried Minoret-Levrault, exasperated by his voluble cousin's remark.

'I know,' she went on, 'that the Abbé Chaperon, though he is a priest, is an honest man. But he is capable of anything for the poor. He must have mined, mined, mined under Uncle Minoret, and the doctor has

fallen into bigotry. We were easy in our minds, and now he is perverted. A man who never believed in anything, and who had principles! Oh, we are all done for! My husband is dreadfully upset.'

Madame Massin, whose speeches were so many arrows that stung her stout cousin, made him walk as briskly as herself in spite of his size, to the great amazement of the people who were going to mass. She wanted to catch up this Uncle Minoret and show him to the postmaster.

On the Gatinais side of Nemours the town is commanded by a hill, along the base of which the river Loing flows, and the road runs to Montargis. The church, on which time has cast a rich mantle of grey, for it was certainly rebuilt in the fourteenth century by the Guises, in whose honour Nemours gave its name to a duchy and peerage, stands at the end of the town beyond a large archway, as in a frame. For buildings, as for men, position is everything. Shaded by trees and shown to advantage by a neat little square, this lonely church has a quite imposing effect. As they came out on to the square, the postmaster could see his uncle giving his arm to the young girl they had called Ursule, each carrying a prayer-book, and just entering the church. The old man took off his hat in the porch, and his perfectly white head, like a summit covered with snow, shone in the soft gloom of the great doorway.

'Well, Minoret, what do you say to your uncle's conversion?' cried the tax-receiver of Nemours, whose name was Crémière.

'What do you expect me to say?' replied the postmaster, offering him a pinch of snuff.

'Well answered, Father Levrault. You cannot say what you think, if a certain learned writer was correct in saying that a man must necessarily think his words before he can speak his thought,' mischievously exclaimed a young man who had just come up, and who played in Nemours the part of Mephistopheles in 'Faust.'

This rascally fellow, named Goupil, was head clerk to Monsieur Crémière-Dionis, the notary of the town. Notwithstanding the antecedents of an almost crapulous career, Dionis had taken Goupil into his office when absolute destitution hindered him from remaining any longer at Paris, where the clerk had spent all the money left him by his father, a well-to-do farmer, who meant him to become a notary. Only to see Goupil was enough to tell you that he had made haste to enjoy life; for, to procure himself pleasure, he must have paid dearly for it. Though very short, the clerk, at seven-and-twenty, had a form as burly as that of any man of forty. Short, thin legs, a broad face with a mottled, muddy skin, like the sky before a storm, and a bald forehead, gave emphasis to this strange figure. His face looked as if it belonged to a hunchback, whose hump was an internal deformity. A peculiarity of this sour, pale face confirmed the notion of this invisible malformation. His nose, hooked and twisted, as is often the case with hunchbacks, had a crossway slope from right to left, instead of dividing the face down the middle. His mouth, pinched at the corners—the sardonic mouth—was always eager for irony. His thin, reddish hair fell in dank locks, showing the head through here and there. His great hands and clumsy wrists, at the end of overlong arms, were like talons, and very seldom clean. Goupil wore shoes only fit to be thrown into the dust-heap, and rusty-black, spun-silk stockings; his black coat and trousers, rubbed perfectly threadbare, and almost greasy with dirt; his abject waistcoats, with buttons from which the mould had slipped out; the old bandana he wore as a cravat—every part of his dress proclaimed the cynical misery to which his passions condemned him.

This aggregate of sinister details was completed by a pair of goat's eyes, the iris set in yellow rings, at once lascivious and cowardly. No man in Nemours was more feared or more respectfully treated than Goupil. Strong

in pretensions which his ugliness allowed, he had the detestable wit that is peculiar to persons who take every liberty, and he made use of it to be revenged for the mortifications of his permanent jealousy. He rhymed satirical couplets such as are sung at the Carnival, he got up farcical demonstrations, and himself wrote almost the whole of the local newspaper gossip. Dionis, a keen, false nature, and therefore a timid one, kept Goupil as much out of fear as on account of his intelligence and his thorough knowledge of family interests in the neighbourhood. But the master so little trusted the clerk that he managed his accounts himself, did not allow him to lodge at his house, and never employed him on any confidential or delicate business. The clerk flattered his master, never showing the resentment he felt at this conduct; and he watched Madame Dionis with an eye to revenge. He had a quick intelligence, and worked well and easily.

'Oh you! You are laughing already at our misfortunes,' said the postmaster to the clerk, who was rubbing his hands.

As Goupil basely flattered every passion of Désiré's, who for the last five years had made him his companion, the postmaster treated him cavalierly enough, never suspecting what a horrible store of evil feeling was accumulating at the bottom of Goupil's heart at each fresh thrust. The clerk having come to the conclusion that he, more than any one, needed money, and knowing himself to be superior to all the good townsfolk of Nemours, aimed at making a fortune, and counted on Désiré's friendship to procure for him one of the three good openings in the place—the registrarship of the law courts, the business of one of the ushers, or that of Dionis. So he patiently endured the postmaster's hectoring, and Madame Minoret-Levrault's disdain, and played an ignominious part to oblige Désiré, who, for these two years past, had left him to console the Ariadnes he abandoned at the end of the

vacation. Thus, Goupil ate the crumbs of the suppers he had prepared.

'If I had been the old fool's nephew, he should not have made God my co-heir,' retorted the clerk, with a hideous grin that showed his wide-set and threatening black teeth.

At this moment Massin-Levrault, junior, the justice's registrar, came up with his wife, and with him was Madame Crémière the tax-receiver's wife. This man, one of the crudest natives of the little town, had a face like a Tartar, small, round eyes like sloes under a sloping forehead, crinkled hair, an oily skin, large flat ears, a mouth almost without lips, and a thin beard. His manners had the merciless smoothness of the usurer whose dealings are based on fixed principles. He spoke like a man who has lost his voice. To complete the picture, he made his wife and his eldest daughter write out the copies of verdicts.

Madame Crémière was a very fat woman, doubtfully fair, with a thickly freckled complexion; she wore her gowns too tight, was great friends with Madame Dionis, and passed as well informed because she read novels. This lady of finance of the lowest type, full of pretensions to elegance and culture, was awaiting her uncle's fortune to assume 'a certain style,' to decorate her drawing-room, and 'receive' her fellow-townsfolk; for her husband refused to allow her clockwork lamps, lithographs, and the trifles she saw in the notary's wife's drawing-room. She was excessively afraid of Goupil, who was always on the watch to repeat her *capsulingies*—this was her way of saying *lapsus linguæ*. One day Madame Dionis said to her that she did not know what water to use for her teeth.

'Try gum water,' said she.*

By this time most of old Doctor Minoret's collateral

* Madame Crémière's 'capsulingies' are impossible to translate; an equivalent is all that can be attempted.

relations had assembled in the Church Square, and the importance of the event which had agitated them was so universally understood, that the groups of peasants, men and women, armed with red umbrellas and clad in the bright hues which make them so picturesque on fête-days as they tramp the roads, all had their eyes turned on the doctor's presumptive heirs. In those little towns, which hold a middle rank between the larger villages and the great cities, people who do not attend mass linger on the Square. They discuss business. At Nemours the hour of mass is also that of a weekly money-market, to which come the residents in the scattered houses from a mile and a half round. This accounts for the mutual understanding of the peasants as against the masters, on the price of produce in relation to labour.

'And how would you have hindered it?' said the master to Goupil.

'I would have made myself as indispensable to him as the air he breathes. But you did not know how to manage him to begin with. An inheritance needs as much looking after as a pretty woman, and for lack of care both may slip through your fingers. If my master's wife were here, she would tell you how accurate the comparison is,' he added.

'But Monsieur Bongrand has just told me we need not be uneasy,' said the Justice's registrar.

'Oh! there are several ways of saying that,' replied Goupil, with a laugh. 'I should have liked to hear your cunning Justice say that! Why, if there were nothing more to be done; if I, like him—for he lives at your uncle's,—knew that the game was up, I should say with him, "Don't be at all uneasy."'

And as he spoke the words, Goupil smiled in such a comical way, and gave them so plain a meaning, that the inheritors at once suspected the registrar of having been taken in by the Justice's cunning. The receiver

of taxes, a fat little man, as insignificant as a tax collector must be, and as witless as a clever wife could wish, demolished his co-heir Massin with: 'Didn't I tell you so?'

As double dealers always ascribe their own duplicity to others, Massin looked askance at the Justice of the peace, who was at this moment standing near the church with a former client, the Marquis du Rouvre.

'If only I were sure of it!' said he.

'You could nullify the protection he extends to the Marquis du Rouvre, who is within the power of the law, and liable to imprisonment; he is deluging him with advice at this moment,' said Goupil, insinuating an idea of revenge to the registrar. 'But draw it mild with your chief; he is very wide awake; he must have some influence over your uncle, and may yet be able to prevent his leaving everything to the Church.'

'Pooh! we shall not die of it,' said Minoret-Levrault, opening his huge snuff-box.

'You will not live by it either,' replied Goupil, making the two women shiver; for they, more rapidly than their husbands, interpreted as privation the loss of the inheritance on which they had counted for comfort. 'But we will drown this little grievance in floods of champagne, in honour of Désiré's return, won't we, *gros père*?' he added, tapping the colossus in the stomach, and thus inviting himself for fear of being forgotten.

Before going any further, the precise reader will perhaps be glad to have here a sort of preamble in the form of a pedigree, which indeed is very necessary to define the degrees of relationship in which the old man, so suddenly converted, stood to the three fathers of families or their wives. These intermarriages of kindred race in provincial life may be the subject of more than one instructive reflection.

At Nemours there are not more than three or four noble families, of no great rank or fame; among them, at the time of our story, shone that of the Portenduères. These exclusive families visit the nobility who possess lands and châteaux in the neighbouring country—the D'Aiglemonts, for instance, owners of the fine estate of Saint-Lange, and the Marquis du Rouvre, on whose property, eaten up with mortgages, the townsfolk kept a greedy eye. The nobility who live in the towns have no wealth. Madame de Portenduère's whole estate consisted of a farm, yielding four thousand seven hundred francs a year, and her house in the town. In the opposite scale to this miniature Faubourg St. Germain are half a score of rich citizens, retired millers and tradespeople, in short, a miniature middle class, below whom struggle the small shopkeepers, the labouring class, and the peasants. This middle class affords here, as in the Swiss cantons and other small communities, the curious phenomenon of the dispersal of a few families native to the soil, perhaps ancient Gaulish clans, settling on a district, pervading it, and making all the inhabitants cousins. At the time of Louis XI., the period when the third estate at last took the by-names they were known by as permanent surnames, some of which presently mingled with those of the feudal class, the citizens of Nemours were all Minoret, Massin, Levrault, or Crémière. By Louis XIII.'s time these four families had given rise to Massin-Crémière, Levrault-Massin, Massin-Minoret, Minoret-Minoret, Crémière-Levrault, Levrault-Minoret-Massin, Massin-Levrault, Minoret-Massin, Massin-Massin, and Crémière-Massin; all further diversified by 'junior' and 'eldest son'; or by Crémière-François, Levrault-Jacques, and Jean-Minoret, enough to madden a Father Anselme, if the populace ever needed a genealogist.

The changes in this domestic kaleidoscope with four separate elements were so complicated by births and marriages, that the pedigree of the citizens of Nemours

would have puzzled even the compilers of the Almanac de Gotha, notwithstanding the atomic science with which they work out the zigzags of German alliances. For a long time the Minorets held the tanneries, the Crémières were the millers, the Massins went into business, the Levraults remained farmers.

Happily for the country, these four stocks struck out rather than round the trunk, or threw out suckers by the expatriation of sons who sought a living elsewhere: there are Minorets, cutlers, at Melun, Levraults at Montargis, Massins at Orleans, and Crémières who have grown rich at Paris. Very various are the destinies of these bees that have swarmed outside the native hive. Rich Massins employ labouring Massins, just as there are German princes in the service of Austria or Prussia. In the same department may be seen a Minoret millionaire protected by a Minoret soldier with the same blood in their veins; but having only their names in common, these four shuttles had unceasingly woven a human web, of which each piece turned out a gown or a clout, the finest lawn or the coarsest lining. The same blood throbbed in their head, feet, or heart, in toiling hands, damaged lungs, or a brow big with genius. The heads of the clan faithfully clung to the little town where the ties of relationship could be relaxed or tightened, as the results of this community of names might dictate.

In every country, with a change of names, you will find the same fact; but bereft of the poetry with which feudality had invested it, and which Walter Scott has reproduced with so much talent.

Look a little higher, and study humanity in history. All the noble families of the eleventh century, now almost all extinct excepting the royal race of Capet, must have co-operated towards the birth of a Rohan, a Montmorency, a Bauffremont, a Mortemart of the present day; at last, all would co-exist in the blood of the humblest man of really gentle birth. In other words,

every citizen is cousin to other citizens, every noble is cousin to other nobles. As we are told in the sublime page of Biblical genealogy, in a thousand years the three families of Shem, Ham, and Japhet could people the whole earth. A family can become a nation; and, unfortunately, a nation may become one single family. To prove this we have only to apply to a family pedigree—in which the ancestors multiply backwards in geometrical progression—the sum worked out by the sage who invented the game of chess. He claimed, as his reward from the Persian king, an ear of corn for the first square on the board, two for the second, and so on, doubling the number every time, and proved that the whole kingdom could not pay it. This network of the nobility entangled in the network of the middle class, this antagonism of blood—the one class protected by rigid traditions, the other by the active endurance of labour and the craft of trade instincts—brought about the Revolution of 1789. The two strains, almost united, are to be seen to-day face to face with collaterals bereft of their inheritance. What will they do? Our political future is big with the reply.

The family of the man who, in Louis xv.'s time, was the representative Minoret, was so large, that one of the five—the very Minoret whose coming to church was making such a sensation—went to seek his fortune in Paris, and appeared in his native town only at long intervals, whither he came, no doubt, to acquire his share of the inheritance at the death of his grandparents. After suffering a great deal, as all young men must who are gifted with a strong will and desire a place in the brilliant world of Paris, this son of the Minorets made a career more splendid perhaps than he had dreamed of at the beginning; for he devoted himself to medicine, one of the professions in which both talent and good luck are needed, and good luck even more than talent. Supported by Dupont (of Nemours), brought by a happy

chance into contact with the Abbé Morellet (whom Voltaire nicknamed *Mords les*), and patronised by the encyclopedists, Doctor Minoret attached himself with fanatical devotion to the great physician Bordeu, Diderot's friend. D'Alembert, Helvétius, Baron d'Holbach, and Grimm, to whom he was a mere boy, ended, no doubt, like Bordeu, by taking an interest in Minoret, who in 1777 had a fine connection among the deists, encyclopedists, sensualists, materialists—call them as you will—the wealthy philosophers of that day. Though he was very little of a quack, he invented a famous remedy, Lelièvre's balsam, which was cried up in the *Mercure de France*, and which was permanently advertised on the last page of that paper, the encyclopedists' organ. The apothecary Lelièvre, a clever man of business, discerned a success where Doctor Minoret had seen nothing more than a preparation to be included in the pharmacopœia; he honestly divided the profits with the doctor, who was Rouelle's pupil in chemistry, as he was Bordeu's in medicine. It would have needed less to make him a materialist.

In 1778, when Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* was the rage, and men sometimes married for love, he married the daughter of Valentin Mirouët, the famous harpsichord player, herself a fine musician, but weakly and delicate, who died of the Revolution. Minoret was intimate with Robespierre, to whom he had once caused a gold medal to be awarded for a dissertation on these questions: 'What is the origin of the opinion by which part of the shame attaching to the disgraceful punishment of a guilty man is reflected on all his family? Is this opinion generally useful or mischievous? And, supposing it to be mischievous, by what means can we avert the disastrous results?' The Academy of Arts and Sciences at Metz, to which Minoret belonged, must still have the original copy of this discourse. Although, thanks to this friendship, the doctor's wife had nothing to fear, she lived

in such dread of being sent to the scaffold that this invincible terror aggravated an aneurism due to a too sensitive nature. In spite of all the precautions a man could take who idolised his wife, Ursule met the tumbrel full of condemned victims, and among them, as it happened, Madame Roland. The spectacle caused her death. Minoret, who had spoiled his Ursule, and refused her nothing, so that she had led a life of extravagant luxury, at her death found himself almost a poor man. Robespierre appointed him first physician to a hospital.

Although the name of Minoret had been somewhat famous during the vehement discussions to which Mesmerism had given rise, a fame which had recalled him now and then to his relations' memory, the Revolution was so powerful a solvent, and broke up so many family connections, that in 1813 no one at Nemours knew even of Doctor Minoret's existence, when an unexpected meeting suggested to him the idea of returning, as hares do, to die in his form.

In travelling through France, where the eye is so soon fatigued by the monotony of the wide plains, who has not known the delightful sensation of discerning, from the top of a hill where the road turns or descends, and where he expected to see a dull landscape, a green valley watered by a stream, and a little town sheltered under a cliff, like a hive in the hollow of an old willow-tree? As he hears the postillion's cry of 'Come up!' while he walks at his horse's side, the traveller shakes off sleep, and admires as a dream within a dream some lovely scene which is to the stranger what a fine passage in a book is to the reader—a brilliant idea of Nature's. This is the effect produced by the sudden view of Nemours on the road from Burgundy. It is seen from the height in an amphitheatre of naked rocks, grey, white, and black, like those which are scattered throughout the Forest of Fontainebleau; and from among them shoot up solitary trees, standing out against the sky, and giving a rural

aspect to this sort of tumbledown rampart. This is the end of the long wooded slope which rises from Nemours to Bouron, sheltering the road on one side. At the foot of these cliffs spreads a meadow-land, through which the Loing flows, in level pools ending in little waterfalls. This exquisite tract of country, cut through by the Montargis road, is like an elaborate opera scene, the effects seem so carefully worked up.

One morning the doctor, who had been sent for by a rich invalid in Burgundy, and who was hastening back to Paris, not having mentioned at the last change of horses which road he wished to take, was unwittingly brought through Nemours, and between two naps saw once more the landscape familiar to his childhood. The doctor had by this time lost many of his old friends. The disciple of the Encyclopedia had lived to see La Harpe a convert, had buried Lebrun-Pindare, and Marie-Joseph de Chénier, and Morellet, and Madame Helvétius. He had seen the *quasi* overthrow of Voltaire under the attacks of Geoffroy, Fréron's successor. Hence he was thinking of retiring. And when the post-chaise stopped at the top of the High Street of Nemours, his good feeling prompted him to inquire after his family. Minoret-Levrault himself came out to see the doctor, who recognised in the postmaster his eldest brother's son. This nephew introduced as his wife the only daughter of old Levrault-Crémière, who, twelve years ago, had left her the posting business and the handsomest inn in Nemours.

'Well, nephew,' said the doctor, 'and have I any other heirs?'

'My aunt Minoret, your sister, married a Massin-Massin.'

'Yes, the intendant at Saint-Lange.'

'She died a widow, leaving one daughter, who has lately married a Crémière-Crémière, a very nice fellow, who so far has no appointment.'

'To be sure; she is my own niece. Now, as my

brother at sea died unmarried, and Captain Minoret was killed at Monte-Legino, and I am here, that is an end of my father's family. Have I any relations on my mother's side? She was a Jean-Massin-Levrault.'

'Of the Jean-Massin-Levraults,' replied Minoret-Levrault, 'only one daughter survived, who married Monsieur Crémière-Levrault-Dionis, a dealer in corn and forage, who died on the scaffold. His wife died of a broken heart, and quite ruined, leaving one girl, married to a Levrault-Minoret, a farmer at Montereau, who is doing well; and their daughter has just married a Massin-Levrault, a notary's clerk at Montargis, where his father is a locksmith.'

'So I have no lack of inheritors,' said the doctor cheerfully, and he determined to walk round Nemours in his nephew's company.

The Loing meanders through the town, fringed with terraced gardens and neat houses that look as if happiness should inhabit there rather than elsewhere. When the doctor turned out of the High Street into the Rue des Bourgeois, Minoret-Levrault pointed out the property of Monsieur Levrault, a rich ironmaster at Paris, who, he said, was lately dead.

'There, uncle,' said he, 'is a pretty house to be sold, with a beautiful garden down to the river.'

'Let us go in,' said the doctor, seeing a house at the further side of a paved courtyard, shut in by the walls of houses on either side, hidden by clumps of trees and climbing plants.

'It is built on cellars,' said the doctor as he went in, up a high outside stairway, decorated with blue and white earthenware pots in which the geraniums were still in bloom. The house, like most provincial residences, was pierced by a passage down the middle, leading from the courtyard to the garden; to the right was a single sitting-room with four windows, two to the yard, and two to the garden; but Levrault-Levrault had turned one of these

into an entrance to a long conservatory built of brick, leading from the room to the river, where it ended in a hideous Chinese summer-house.

'Very good!' said the doctor. 'By roofing and flooring this conservatory I could make a place for my books, and turn that amazing piece of architecture into a pretty little study.'

On the other side of the passage, looking on to the garden, was a dining-room, decorated in imitation of lacquer, with a black ground and green and gold flowers; this was divided from the kitchen by the staircase. A little pantry behind the lower flight led from the dining-room to the kitchen, which had barred windows looking out on the courtyard. On the first floor were two sets of rooms, and above that wainscotted attics, quite habitable. After a brief inspection of this house, which was covered with green vine-trellis from top to bottom, on the courtyard front as well as on the garden side, with a terrace to the river edged with earthenware flower-vases, the doctor remarked—

'Levrault-Levrault must have spent a good deal here!'

'Oh, his weight in gold!' replied Minoret-Levrault. 'He had a passion for flowers—such folly! "What profit do they bring?" as my wife says. As you see, a painter came from Paris to paint his corridor with flowers in fresco. He put in whole plate mirrors everywhere. The ceilings were done up with cornices that cost six francs a foot. In the dining-room, the floor is of the finest inlay—such folly! The house is not worth a penny the more for it.'

'Well, nephew, buy it for me. Let me know when it is settled; here is my address. The rest my lawyer will attend to.—Who lives opposite?' he asked as they went out.

'Some *émigrés*,' said the postmaster; 'a Chevalier de Portenduère.'

When the house was bought, the distinguished physician, instead of coming to live in it, wrote orders to his nephew to let it. Levrault's Folly was taken by the notary of Nemours, who sold his business to Dionis his head clerk, and who died two years after, leaving the doctor burthened with a house to let just at the time when Napoleon's fate was being sealed in the neighbourhood. The doctor's heirs, somewhat taken in, had at first supposed his wish to return to be a rich man's whim, and were in despair when, as they imagined, he had ties in Paris which kept him there, and would rob them of his leavings. However, Minoret-Levrault's wife seized this opportunity of writing to the doctor. The old man replied that as soon as peace should be signed, the roads cleared of soldiers, and communications free once more, he meant to live at Nemours. He made his appearance there with two of his clients, the architect to the hospital, and an upholsterer who undertook the repairs, the rearrangement of the rooms, and the removal of his furniture. Madame Minoret-Levrault proposed to him as caretaker the cook of the departed notary, and this he agreed to.

When the heirs learned that their uncle, or great-uncle Minoret, was really going to live at Nemours, their families were seized by an absorbing but almost legitimate curiosity, in spite of the political events which just then more especially agitated the district of the Gatinais and Brie. Was their uncle rich? Was he economical or extravagant? Would he leave a fine fortune or nothing at all? Had he invested in annuities? All this they at last came to know, but with infinite difficulty, and by means of much backstairs spying.

After the dea'h of his wife Ursule Mirouët, from 1789 to 1813, the doctor, who in 1805 had been appointed consulting physician to the Emperor, must have made a great deal of money, but no one knew how much; he lived very simply, with no expenses beyond a carriage by

the year, and a splendid apartment; he never entertained, and almost always dined out. His housekeeper, furious at not being asked to go with him to Nemours, told Zélie Levrault, the postmaster's wife, that to her knowledge he had fourteen thousand francs a year in consols. Now, after practising for twenty years in a profession which such appointments as head physician to a hospital, as physician to the Emperor, and as member of the Institut could not fail to have made lucrative, these fourteen thousand francs a year as dividends on repeated investments argued no more than a hundred and sixty thousand francs in savings! And to have laid by no more than eight thousand francs a year, the doctor must have had many vices or virtues to indulge. Still, neither the housekeeper, nor Zélie, nor any one else could divine the secret of so small a fortune. Minoret, who was greatly regretted in his own neighbourhood, was one of the most liberal benefactors in Paris, and, like Larrey, kept his acts of benevolence a profound secret.

So it was with the liveliest satisfaction that his heirs watched the arrival of their uncle's handsome furniture and extensive library, and knew him to be an officer of the Legion of Honour, and made Chevalier of the Order of Saint-Michael by the King, in consequence, perhaps, of his retirement, which made way for some favourite. But the architect, the painters, and the upholsterers had finished everything in the most comfortable fashion, and still the doctor came not. Madame Minoret-Levrault, who watched the upholsterer and the architect as though her own property were at stake, discovered, through the inadvertence of a young man sent to put the books in order, that the doctor had in his care an orphan named Ursule. This news caused strange dismay in the town of Nemours. At last the old man came home in about the middle of January 1815, and settled down without any fuss, bringing with him a little girl of ten months and her nurse.

'Ursule cannot be his daughter; he is seventy-one years old!' cried the alarmed expectants.

'Whoever she may be, she will give us plenty of bother,' said Madame Massin.

The doctor's reception of his grand-niece on the mother's side was cold enough; her husband had just bought the place of registrar to the Justice of the peace, and they were the first to venture on any allusion to the difficulties of their position. Massin and his wife were not rich. Massin's father, an ironworker at Montargis, had been obliged to compound with his creditors, and worked now, at the age of sixty-seven, as hard as a young man; he would have nothing to leave. Madame Massin's father, Levrault-Minoret, had lately died at Montereau of grief at the results of the fighting—his farm burnt down, his fields destroyed, and his cattle killed and eaten.

'We shall get nothing out of your great-uncle,' said Massin to his wife, who was expecting her second baby.

But the doctor secretly gave them ten thousand francs, with which the registrar, as the friend of the notary and of the usher of Nemours, had begun money-lending; and he made the peasants pay such usurious interest that, at this later day, Goupil knew him to possess about eighty thousand francs of unconfessed capital.

As to his other niece, the doctor, by his influence in Paris, procured the post of receiver of public moneys at Nemours for Crémière, and advanced the necessary security. Though Minoret-Levrault wanted nothing, Zélie, very jealous of her uncle's liberality to his two nieces, came to see him with her son, then ten years old, whom she was about to send to school in Paris, where, as she said, education was very costly. As physician to Monsieur de Fontanes, the Doctor obtained a half-scholarship at the College of Louis le Grand for his grand-nephew, who was placed in the fourth class.

Crémière, Massin, and Minoret-Levrault, all three very common men, were condemned beyond appeal by the doctor during the first two or three months, while they were trying to circumvent their future prospects rather than himself. Persons who act by instinct have this disadvantage as compared with those who have ideas—they are more easily seen through. The inspirations of instinct are too elementary, and appeal too directly to the eye, not to be detected at once; while to penetrate ideas, the devices of the mind, equal intelligence is needed on both sides.

Having thus purchased the gratitude of his heirs, and to some extent stopped their mouths, the wily doctor alleged his occupations, his habits, and the care he gave to little Ursule, so as not to receive their visits, without however shutting his door to them: 'He liked to dine alone; he went to bed and rose late; he had come back to his native place to enjoy repose and solitude.' These whims in an old man seemed natural enough, and his expectant heirs were satisfied to pay him a weekly visit on Sundays between one and four, to which he vainly tried to put a stop by saying—

'Only come to see me when you want me.'

The doctor, though he did not refuse his advice in serious cases, especially among the poor, would not become physician to the little asylum at Nemours, and declared that he would no longer practise.

'I have killed enough people!' said he, laughing, to the Curé Chaperon, who, knowing his benevolence, pleaded for the poor.

'He is quite an oddity.'

This verdict on Doctor Minoret was the harmless revenge of wounded vanity, for the physician formed a little society for himself of persons who deserve to be contrasted with the heirs. Now, those of the town magnates who thought themselves worthy to swell the Court circle of a man wearing the black ribbon of

Saint Michael, nourished a ferment of jealousy against the doctor and his privileged friends which, unhappily, was not impotent.

By a singularity which can only be explained by the saying that 'Extremes meet,' the materialist doctor and the priest of Nemours very soon were friends. The old man was very fond of backgammon, the favourite game of the clergy, and the Abbé was a match for the physician. This game thus became the first bond between them. Then Minoret was charitable, and the Curé of Nemours was the Fénelon of the Gatinais. They both were men of varied information; thus, in all Nemours, the man of God was the only man who could understand the atheist. In order to discuss any matter, two men must understand each other to begin with. What pleasure is there in saying sharp things to any one who does not feel them? The doctor and the priest had too much good taste, and had seen too much good company, not to observe its rules; they could therefore carry on the little warfare that is so necessary to conversation. Each hated the other's opinions, but they esteemed each other's character. If such contrasts and such sympathies are not the essential elements of intimacy, must we not despair of society, since, especially in France, some antagonism is indispensable to it? Contrariety of characters, not antagonism of opinions, is what gives rise to antipathies. So the Abbé Chaperon was the doctor's first friend at Nemours.

This priest, now sixty years of age, had been Curé of Nemours ever since the re-establishment of Catholic worship. He had refused promotion to be vicar-general of his diocese out of attachment to his flock. If those who were indifferent to religion thought the better of him for it, the faithful loved him all the more. Thus venerated by his flock, and esteemed by the community, the curé did good without inquiring too closely as to the religious views of those who were unfortunate. His

own dwelling, scarcely supplied with furniture enough for the strictest necessities of life, was as cold and bare as a miser's hovel. Avarice and charity betray themselves by similar results; does not charity lay up in heaven the treasure that the miser hoards on earth? The Abbé Chaperon took his servant to task for every expense, more severely than Gobseck ever scolded his—if, indeed, that notorious Jew ever had a servant. The good priest often sold his silver shoe buckles and breeches buckles to give the money to some poor wretch he had found destitute. On seeing him come out of church with the tongues of his knee-straps pulled through the button-holes, the devout ladies of the town would trot off to look for the curé's buckles at the one jeweller's and watchmaker's shop in Nemours, and reproach their pastor as they restored them to him. He never bought himself linen or clothes, and wore them till they were dropping to pieces. His underclothing, thick with darns, fretted his skin like a hair-shirt. Then Madame de Portenduère, or some other good soul, plotted with his housekeeper to replace his old shirts or cloth clothes by new ones while he slept; and the priest did not always immediately perceive the exchange. He dined off pewter, with iron forks and spoons; when, on great occasions, he had to receive his subordinate clergy and other curés, a duty that falls on the head of a district, he borrowed silver and table-linen from his friend the atheist.

'My plate is working out its salvation,' the doctor would say.

His good deeds, which were sooner or later found out, and which he always reinforced with spiritual comfort, were carried out with sublime simplicity. And such a life was all the more meritorious because the Abbé was full of erudition, as vast as it was various, and a man of superior abilities. In him refinement and elegance, the inseparable attributes of simplicity, added charm to elocution worthy of a prelate. His manners, his character,

and his conduct gave to his society the exquisite flavour of all that is at once candid and subtle in a lofty intellect. Enjoying pleasantry, in a drawing-room he was never the priest. Until Doctor Minoret's arrival, this worthy man left his light under a bushel without a regret; but he no doubt liked him the better for calling it into play.

Possessed of a fairly good library and two thousand francs a year when he came to Nemours, in 1829 the curé had nothing left but the income from his church, and that he gave away almost entirely year by year. A man of good judgment in delicate affairs or in misfortune, more than one of those who never went to church in search of consolation went to the priest's house in quest of advice. An anecdote will suffice to complete this portrait of a character. Certain peasants, seldom it is true, but bad folks at any rate, said they were in danger of imprisonment for debt, or had themselves sued falsely, to stimulate the Abbé's beneficence. They deceived their wives; and the women, seeing themselves threatened with eviction and their cows seized, by their innocent tears deceived the poor curé, who would find the seven or eight hundred francs demanded, which the peasants would spend on a little plot of ground. When some pious persons, churchwardens, pointed out the fraud, begging the curé to consult them for the future, that he might not be the victim of greed, he replied—

'Perhaps those men would have committed some crime to get their acre of land, and is it not a form of good to hinder evil?'

The reader may perhaps find pleasure in this sketch of a figure, remarkable because science and literature had entered that heart and that capable brain without corrupting them in any way.

At sixty years of age the Abbé Chaperon's hair was perfectly white, so keenly was he alive to the sufferings of others, and so deeply had the events of the Revolution affected him. Twice imprisoned for having twice refused

to take certain oaths, he had twice (to use his own expression) said his *In manus*. He was of middle height, neither stout nor thin. His face, deeply furrowed, hollow-cheeked, and colourless, attracted the eye at once by the perfect calm of the lines and the purity of its outline, which looked as if fringed with light. There is a mysterious kind of radiance from the face of a perfectly chaste man. Brown eyes, with bright pupils, gave life to irregular features, under a powerful forehead. His gaze exercised a dominion that may be explained by its sweetness, which did not exclude strength. The arches of his brows were like deep vaults, shadowed by thick grey eyebrows, which frightened no one. As he had lost many teeth, his mouth was shapeless, and his cheeks were hollow; but this ruin was not without charm, and his kindly wrinkles seemed always to be smiling at you.

He walked with difficulty, having very tender feet, without being gouty; so in all weathers he wore soft calf-skin shoes. He thought trousers unsuitable to a priest, and always appeared in stout, black, worsted stockings, knitted by his housekeeper, and black cloth knee-breeches. He did not go out in his priest's gown, but in a brown overcoat and the three-cornered hat he had always bravely worn, even in the worst times. This fine and noble old man, whose face was always beautified by the serenity of a blameless soul, was destined to have so great an influence on men and things in this narrative that it was necessary to go to the sources of his authority.

Minoret took in three papers—one liberal, one ministerial, and one ultra—some periodical magazines and scientific journals, of which the accumulation swelled his library. These journals, the encyclopedist, and his books were an attraction to a retired captain of the Royal Swedish regiment, Monsieur de Jordy, a gentleman, a Voltairean, and an old bachelor, who lived on sixteen hundred francs a year, partly pension, and partly an

annuity. After reading the papers for some days, through the intervention of the curé, M. de Jordy thought it becoming to call and thank the doctor. From his very first visit the old captain, formerly a professor in the military college, won the doctor's good graces, and the visit was promptly returned.

Monsieur de Jordy, a lean, dry little man, but tormented by blood to the head, though he had a very pale face, was striking-looking by reason of a fine forehead, like Charles XII., over which his hair was cropped short, like that of the soldier-king. His blue eyes, which would make one think 'Love has passed that way,' though they were deeply sad, were interesting at first sight, for their gaze betrayed remembrance; but on this point he kept his own secret so completely that his old friends never detected him in any allusion to his past life, nor ever heard one of the exclamations which are sometimes called forth by a similarity in misfortune. He hid the painful mystery of his past under philosophical gaiety; but when he thought himself alone, his movements, weighted by a slowness evidently deliberate rather than senile, bore witness to an ever-present painful thought. The Abbé, indeed, had called him 'The Christian without knowing it.'

Always wearing a blue cloth suit, his somewhat stiff demeanour, and his style of dress, betrayed old habits of military discipline. His voice, soft and musical, spoke to the soul. His fine hands, and the shape of his face, recalling that of the Comte d'Artois, by showing how handsome he must have been in his youth, made the mystery of his life even more impenetrable. It was impossible not to wonder what was the disaster that had stricken a man so handsome, with courage, grace, learning, and all the most delightful qualities of heart which had formerly been united in his person. Monsieur de Jordy always shuddered at the name of Robespierre. He used a great deal of snuff, but, strange to say, he gave it up

for little Ursule, who at first showed a dislike to him in consequence of this habit. Whenever he saw the child, the captain would gaze at her with lingering, almost passionate looks. He was so devoted to her games, and took so much interest in her, that this affection drew still tighter his tie to the doctor, who, on his part, never dared say to the old bachelor—

'Have you too lost children?'

There are beings, good and patient as he was, who go through life with a bitter memory in their hearts, and a smile, at once tender and sorrowful, on their lips, bearing in them the answer to the riddle, but never allowing it to be guessed—out of pride, or scorn, or perhaps revenge—having none but God to trust in or to comfort them. At Nemours, whither, like the doctor, he had come to die in peace, Monsieur de Jordy visited nobody but the curé, who was always at the service of his parishioners, and Madame de Portenduère, who went to bed at nine o'clock. Thus he, weary of the struggle, had at last taken to going to bed early too, notwithstanding the thorns that stuffed his pillow. Thus it was a happy chance for the doctor, as well as for the captain, to meet a man who had known the same society, who spoke the same language, with whom he could exchange ideas, and who went to bed late. When once Monsieur de Jordy, the Abbé Chaperon, and Minoret had spent an evening together, they found it so pleasant that the priest and the soldier came in every evening at nine o'clock, when, little Ursule being in bed, the old man was free. And they all three sat talking till midnight, or one o'clock.

Before long the trio became a quartette. Another man, who knew life well, and who had acquired in his profession that large-mindedness, learning, accumulated observation, shrewdness, and power of conversation which the soldier, the physician, and the priest had gained in dealing with souls, with diseases, and with teaching—the judge of the district, Monsieur Bongrand—got wind of the pleasures

of these evenings, and made himself acquainted with the doctor.

Before being appointed Justice at Nemours, Monsieur Bongrand had for ten years been attorney at Melun, where he himself had pleaded in court, as is usual (in France) in towns where there is no bar. At the age of forty-five he found himself a widower; but feeling too active to do nothing, he had applied for the appointment as Justice of the peace at Nemours, which had fallen vacant some months before the doctor's arrival. The Keeper of the Seals is always glad to find a practical lawyer, and particularly a well-to-do man, to hold these important posts. Monsieur Bongrand lived very simply at Nemours on his salary of fifteen hundred francs, and could thus devote the rest of his income to his son, who was studying for the bar at Paris, and at the same time working up legal procedure under Derville, the famous attorney.

The elder Bongrand was a good deal like a retired brigadier; his was a face, not naturally pale, but washed out, where business, disappointment, and disgust had left their marks; it was wrinkled by much thought, and also by the pinched look of a man who is constantly forced not to say all he thinks; but it was often illuminated by the smiles peculiar to men who, by turns, believe everything or believe nothing, who are accustomed to see and hear everything without surprise, to sound the depths which self-interest reveals at the bottom of men's hearts. Under his hair, which was faded rather than grey, and brushed in smooth waves on his head, rose a sagacious brow, its yellow tint harmonising with that of his thin locks. His face, being rather short, gave him some resemblance to a fox, all the more so because his nose was short and sharp. As he spoke, his wide mouth, like that of all great talkers, sputtered out a spray of white foam-stars, which made his conversation so showery, that Goupil used to say, maliciously: 'You want an umbrella

while you listen to him,' or, 'The justice of the peace rains decisions.'

His eyes seemed keen behind his spectacles, but if he took them off, his expression was dulled, and he looked stupid. Though lively, and even jovial, by his manner he gave himself rather too much the airs of a man of importance. His hands were almost always in his trousers pockets, and he only took them out to settle his spectacles on his nose with a sort of mocking gesture, preliminary to some acute remark or clinching argument. These movements, with his loquacity and his innocent pretentiousness, betrayed the country lawyer; but such slight defects were merely superficial; he made up for them by an acquired geniality, which an exact moralist might define as the indulgence inherent in superiority. And if he had somewhat the look of a fox, he was also supposed to be extremely wily, without being dishonest. His cunning was the exercise of perspicacity. Do we not call folks cunning who can foresee results, and avoid the snares laid for them? The lawyer was fond of whist, a game which the doctor and the captain played, and which the priest soon learned.

This little party created an oasis for themselves in Minoret's drawing-room. The Nemours town doctor, who was not deficient in education or manners, and who respected Minoret as an ornament to the profession, was also admitted; but his business and fatigues, which compelled him to go to bed early that he might rise betimes, hindered him from being so regular a visitor as the doctor's three friends were.

The meetings of these five superior men, who alone in all the town had enough general culture to understand each other, accounts for Minoret's aversion for his heirs; though he might have to leave them his fortune, he could not admit them to his society. Whether the postmaster, the registrar, and the receiver understood this distinction, or were reassured by their uncle's loyal nature and bene-

factions, they ceased at any rate to call on him, to his very great satisfaction.

The four old players of whist and backgammon had, within seven or eight months of the doctor's settling at Nemours, formed a compact and exclusive little circle, which came to each of them as a sort of autumnal brotherhood, quite unlooked for, and therefore all the sweeter and more enjoyable. This family party of choice spirits found in Ursule a child whom each could adopt after his manner: the priest thought of her soul, the lawyer made himself her protector, the soldier promised himself that he would be her tutor; as for Minoret, he was father, mother, and doctor in one.

After acclimatising himself, as it were, the old man fell into habits of life, regulated as it must be in all provincial towns. With Ursule as an excuse, he never received any one in the morning, and asked nobody to dinner; his friends could join him at six o'clock, and remain with him till midnight. The first comers found newspapers on the drawing-room table, and read while waiting for the others, or sometimes went to meet the doctor if he were out walking. These quiet habits were not merely the requirement of old age; they were also a wise and deep-laid precaution on the part of a man of the world to prevent his happiness being troubled by the restless curiosity of his relations, or the petty gossip of a country town. He would concede nothing to the capricious goddess Public Opinion, whose tyranny—one of the curses of France—was about to be established, and to make our whole country one single province. So as soon as the little girl was weaned and could walk, he sent away the cook whom his niece, Madame Minoret-Levrault, had found for him, on discovering that she reported to the postmistress everything that went on in his house.

Little Ursule's nurse, the widow of a poor labourer owning no name but that he was christened by, and who

came from Bougival, had lost her last baby at the age of six months; and the doctor, knowing her to be an honest creature, engaged her as wet nurse, in pity for her destitution. Having no money, and coming from La Bresse, where her family lived in poverty, Antoinette Patris, widow of Pierre *dit* de Bougival, naturally attached herself to Ursule, as foster-mothers do attach themselves to a sucking child as it grows up. This blind motherly affection was reinforced by domestic attachment. Warned beforehand of the doctor's intentions, La Bougival learned to cook on the sly, made herself tidy, and fell into the old man's ways. She took the greatest care of the furniture and the rooms; in short, she was indefatigable. Not only did the doctor insist that his private life should be screened from the world; he had reasons of his own for keeping all knowledge of his affairs from his heirs. Thus by the time he had been at Nemours a year, there was no one in his house but La Bougival on whose discretion he could absolutely rely, and he disguised his real reasons under the all-powerful plea of economy. To the great joy of his family, he became miserly. Without underhand wheedling, solely as a result of her solicitude and devotedness, La Bougival, who at the time when this drama opens was forty-three years old, was housekeeper to the doctor and his little protégée, the pivot on which the whole house turned, in fact, his confidential servant. She had been named La Bougival in consequence of the impossibility of calling her by her Christian name of Antoinette, for names and faces must follow a law of harmony.

The doctor's avarice was not an empty word; but it was for a purpose. From 1817 he gave up two of his newspapers, and ceased to subscribe to periodical magazines. His annual outlay, which all Nemours could reckon, was not more than eighteen hundred francs. Like all old men, his requirements in linen, clothing, and shoes were a mere trifle. Every six months he made a journey to Paris, no doubt to draw and invest

his dividends. In fifteen years he never said a word that had anything to do with his affairs. His confidence in Bongrand was of later date; he never spoke to him of his plans till after the Revolution of 1830. These were the only things in the doctor's life known at that time to the townsfolk and his heirs. As to his political opinions, as his house was rated at no more than a hundred francs in taxes, he never interfered, and would have nothing to say to subscriptions on either the Royalist or the Liberal side. His well-known horror of priests and his deism so little loved demonstrations, that when his nephew, Minoret-Levrault, sent a travelling bookseller to his house to propose that he should buy the 'Curé Meslier,' and General Foy's addresses, he turned the man out of the house. Tolerance on such terms was quite inexplicable to the Liberals of Nemours.

The doctor's three collateral heirs, Minoret-Levrault and his wife, Monsieur and Madame Massin-Levrault, junior, Monsieur and Madame Crémière-Crémière—who shall be called simply Crémière, Massin, and Minoret, since such elaborate distinctions are only needed in the Gatinais,—these three families, too busy to create another centre, met constantly, as people only meet in small towns. The postmaster gave a grand dinner on his son's birthday, a ball at the Carnival, and another on the anniversary of his wedding day, and to these he asked all the townsfolk of Nemours. The tax-receiver also gathered his relations and friends about him twice a year. The Justice's registrar being, as he said, too poor to launch out in such extravagance, lived narrowly in a house half way down the High Street, of which the ground floor was let to his sister, the mistress of the letter-post—another benefaction of the doctor's. But in the course of the year these three inheritors or their wives met in the town or out walking, at the market in the morning, on their door steps, or on Sunday, after mass, on the Church Square, as at this moment, so that they saw each other every day.

Now for the last three years more especially, the doctor's age, his miserliness, and his fortune justified allusions or direct remarks relating to their prospects, which, passing from one to another, at last made the doctor and his heirs equally famous. For these six months not a week had passed without the friends and neighbours of the Minoret family speaking to them with covert envy of the day when the old man's eyes would be closed, and his money boxes opened.

'Doctor Minoret may be a physician, and have come to an understanding with Death,' said one; 'but only God is eternal.'

'Bah! he will bury us all; he is in better health than we are,' one of the expectant heirs would reply hypocritically.

'Well, if you don't get it, your children will—unless that little Ursule——'

'He will not leave her everything!'

Ursule, as Madame Massin had prognosticated, was the real bugbear of the family, the Damocles' sword; and Madame Crémière's favourite last word, 'Those who live will know,' showed plainly enough that they wished her ill rather than well.

The tax-receiver and the registrar, who were poor by comparison with the postmaster, had often, by way of conversation, calculated the doctor's property. As they walked along by the canal, or on the high road, if they saw their uncle coming they looked at each other piteously.

'He has provided himself with some elixir of life, no doubt,' said one.

'He is in league with the devil,' said the other.

'He ought to leave us the lion's share, for that fat Minoret wants for nothing.'

'Oh, Minoret has a son who will get rid of a great deal of his money for him!'

'How much, now, do you suppose the doctor's fortune may run to?' said the registrar.

'Well, at the end of twelve years, twelve thousand francs saved every year come to a hundred and forty-four thousand, and compound interest will have produced at least a hundred thousand francs more; but as, under his Paris lawyer's advice, he must have turned his money to advantage now and again, and as he would have invested up to 1822 at eight or seven and a half per cent. in government securities, the old fellow must at this time have about four hundred thousand francs to turn over, to say nothing of his fourteen thousand francs at five per cent., worth one hundred and sixteen at the present moment. If he were to die to-morrow and leave Ursule an equal share, we should get seven to eight hundred thousand francs, not to mention the house and furniture.'

'Well, a hundred thousand to Minoret, a hundred thousand to the little girl, and three hundred thousand to each of us. That would be the fair thing.'

'Yes, that would keep us in shoe-leather.'

'If he should do that,' cried Massin, 'I would sell my appointment and buy a fine estate. I would try to be made judge at Fontainebleau, and be elected deputy.'

'I would buy a stockbroker's business,' said the tax-receiver.

'Unfortunately, that little girl on his arm and the curé have so blockaded him that we cannot get at him.'

'At any rate, we are quite certain that he will leave nothing to the Church.'

It may now be understood that the heirs were in agonies at seeing their uncle going to mass. The most stupid have wit enough to imagine injury to their interests. Interest is the moving spirit of the peasant as of the diplomate, and on that ground the most stupid in appearance may perhaps prove the sharpest. Hence this terrible argument: 'If that little Ursule is able to bring

her protector within the pale of the Church, she will certainly have power to secure her own inheritance,' blazed out in letters of fire in the mind of the most obtuse of the inheritors. The postmaster had forgotten the enigma in his son's letter in hurrying to the Square; for if the doctor were really in church following the order of prayer, they might lose two hundred and fifty thousand francs. It must be admitted that their fears were based on the strongest and most legitimate of social sentiments, namely, on family interest.

'Well, Monsieur Minoret,' said the mayor—a retired miller who had turned Royalist, a Levrault-Crémière—'when the devil was old, the devil a monk would be! Your uncle, I am told, has come over to us.'

'Better late than never, cousin,' replied the postmaster, trying to conceal his annoyance.

'How that man would laugh if we were disappointed! He is quite capable of making his son marry that cursed little hussy. May the devil get his tail round her!' cried Crémière, shaking his fist at the mayor as he went in under the porch.

'What on earth is the matter with old Crémière?' said the butcher, the eldest son of a Levrault-Levrault. 'Is he not pleased to see his uncle take the road to paradise?'

'Who would ever have believed it?' said the registrar.

'It is never safe to say to the well, "I will never drink of your water!"' replied the notary, who, seeing the group from afar, left his wife to go on to church alone.

'Now, Monsieur Dionis,' said Crémière, taking the lawyer by the arm, 'what do you advise us to do in these circumstances?'

'I advise you,' said Dionis, addressing the expectant heirs, 'to go to bed and get up at the usual hours, to eat your soup before it gets cold, to put your shoes on your feet and your hat on your head; in short, to go on exactly as if nothing had happened.'

'You are a poor comforter!' said Massin with a cunning glance.

In spite of his short, fat figure, and his thick, crushed-looking features, Crémière-Dionis was as slippery as silk. To make a fortune he was in secret partnership with Massin, whom he no doubt kept informed when peasants were in difficulties, and which plots of ground he might devour. So the two men could pick and choose, never letting a good chance escape them, and dividing the profits of this usury on mortgage, which delays, though it cannot hinder, the action of the peasantry on the land. Hence Dionis felt a keen interest in the doctor's will, less on account of Minoret the postmaster and Crémière the tax-receiver than for his friend the registrar's sake. Massin's share would, sooner or later, come to swell the capital on which the partners traded in the district.

'We must try to find out, through Monsieur Bongrand, who has fired this shot,' replied the lawyer in a low voice, as a warning to Massin to lie low.

'What are you doing here, Minoret?' was suddenly heard from a little woman who bore down on the group, in the midst of which the postmaster was visible as a tower. 'You do not know what has become of Désiré, and you seem to have taken root there on your two feet when I fancied you were on horseback!—Good-morning, ladies and gentlemen!'

This spare little woman, pale and fair, dressed in a cotton gown—white, with a large flowered pattern in chocolate-colour—in an embroidered cap trimmed with lace, and a small green shawl over her flat shoulders, was the postmistress, who made the stoutest postillions quake, the servants, and the carters; who kept the till and the books; and managed the house with her finger and eye, as the neighbours were in the habit of saying. Like a true, thrifty housewife, she had not a single article of jewellery. She did not 'favour frippery and trash,' as she put it; she liked what was durable, and in spite of its being Sunday,

she had on her black silk apron with pockets, in which a bunch of keys jingled. Her shrill voice was ear-splitting. In spite of thc sweet blue of her eyes, her hard gaze was in evident harmony with the thin lips of a tightly-set mouth, and a high, projecting, and very despotic brow. Her glance was sharp, sharper still were her gestures and words. 'Zélie being obliged to have will enough for two, had always had enough for three,' Goupil used to say; and it was he who noted the successive reigns of three young post-boys, very neatly kept, whom Zélie had set up after seven years' service. Indeed, the spiteful clerk always called them Postillion I., Postillion II., and Postillion III. But the small influence exerted in the house by these young men, and their perfect obedience, proved that Zélie had simply and purely taken an interest in really good fellows.

'Ay, Zélie values zeal,' the clerk would reply to any one who made such a remark.

This piece of scandal was, however, improbable. Since the birth of her son, whom she nursed herself, though it was impossible to see how, the postmistress had thought only of adding to her fortune, and devoted herself without respite to the management of her immense business. To rob her of a truss of straw or a few bushels of oats, to detect her in error in the most complicated accounts, was a thing impossible, though she wrote a cat's scrawl, and knew nothing of arithmetic beyond addition and subtraction. She walked out solely to inspect her hay, her oats, and her after-crops; then she would send her man to fetch in the crops, and her postillions to pack the hay, and tell them within a hundredweight how much they could get off this or that field. Though she was the soul of the huge body known as Minoret-Levrault, and led him by his idiotically snub nose, she was liable to the frights which more or less constantly agitate those who quell and lead wild beasts, and she quarrelled with him frequently. The post-boys knew by the rowings

they got from Minoret when his wife had scolded him, for her rage glanced off on to them. But, indeed, Madame Minoret was as shrewd as she was avaricious.

'Where would Minoret be without his wife?' was a byword in more than one household in the town.

'When you hear what is happening to us you will be beside yourself too,' replied the Master of Nemours.

'Well, what is it?'

'Ursule has taken Doctor Minoret to mass.'

Zélie Levrault's eyes seemed to dilate; for an instant she was silent, yellow with rage; then crying, 'I must see it to believe it,' she rushed into the church. The Host was just elevated. Favoured by the general attitude of worship, she was able to look along each row of chairs and benches as she went up past the chapels to the place where Ursule knelt, and by her side she saw the old man, bare-headed.

If you can recall the portraits of Barbé-Marbois, Boissy-d'Anglas, Morellet, Helvétius, and Frederick the Great, you will have an exact idea of the head of Doctor Minoret, who in his green old age was a good deal like these famous personages. These heads, struck as it might seem from the same die, for they lend themselves to the medallist's art, present a severe and almost puritanical profile, cold colouring, a mathematical brain, a certain narrowness of face, as if it had been squeezed, astute eyes, grave lips, and something aristocratic in sentiment rather than in habits, in the intellect rather than in the character. They all have lofty foreheads, receding a little at the top, which betrays a tendency to materialism. You will find all these leading characteristics of the head, and the look of the face, in the portraits of the encyclopedists, of the orators of the Girondins, and of the men of that time whose religious belief was almost a blank, and who, though calling themselves deists, were atheists. A deist is an atheist with an eye to the off-chance of some advantage.

Old Minoret had a forehead of this type, but furrowed with wrinkles, and it derived a sort of childlike ingenuousness from the way in which his silver hair, combed back like a woman's at her toilet, curled in thin locks on his black coat; for he persisted in dressing, as in the days of his youth, in black silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles, knee-breeches of rich silk, a white waistcoat, across which lay the black ribbon of Saint Michael, and a black coat with the red rosette in the buttonhole. This characteristic head, its cold pallor softened by the ivory-yellow tone of old age, was under the full light from a window. At the moment when the postmistress came in, the doctor's blue eyes, with slightly reddened lids and pathetic lines, were fixed on the altar; new conviction had given them a new expression. His spectacles, laid in his prayer-book, marked the page where he had ceased to read. With his arms folded across his breast, the tall, spare old man, standing in an attitude which proclaimed the full power of all his faculties, and something immovable in his faith, never ceased from gazing at the altar with a humble look, rejuvenescent through hope; not choosing to see his nephew's wife, who stood rooted almost face to face with him, as if to reproach him for this return to God.

On seeing every face turned to look at her, Zélie hastily retired, and came out on to the Square again less precipitately than she had gone into the church; she had counted on that inheritance, and the inheritance was becoming problematical. She found the registrar, the tax-receiver, and their wives in even greater consternation than before. Goupil had taken pleasure in tormenting them.

'It is not here, on the Square, and under the eyes of the whole town, that we can discuss our private affairs,' said the postmistress; 'come to my house. You will not be in the way, Monsieur Dionis,' she added to the lawyer.

So the probable disinheritance of the Massins, the

Crémières, and the postmaster was to become the talk of the country.

Just as the heirs and the notary were about to cross the Square on their way to the house, the clatter of the diligence arriving at top speed made a tremendous noise; it stopped at the coach-office, a few yards from the church, at the top of the High Street.

'Why, like you, Minoret, I had forgotten Désiré,' said Zélie. 'Let us go to meet him; he is almost a lawyer now, and this business is partly his concern.'

The arrival of a diligence is always a diversion, and when it is behind time something interesting may be expected; so the crowd rushed to see the 'Ducler.'

'There is Désiré,' was a general cry.

At once the tyrant and the ringleader of fun in Nemours, Désiré's visits always brought some excitement to the town. A favourite with the young men, to whom he was liberal, his presence was to them a stimulant; but his pleasures were so much dreaded, that more than one family was glad that his studies for the law should be carried on in Paris. Désiré Minoret, slight, thin, and fair like his mother, with her blue eyes and colourless complexion, smiled at the crowd from the coach door, and jumped out to embrace her. A slight sketch of this youth will explain Zélie's flattered pride on beholding him.

The young law-student wore neat little boots, white English drill trousers with patent leather straps, a handsome cravat carefully folded, and a still handsomer pin, a smart fancy waistcoat, and in its pocket a flat watch with a dangling chain; a short blue cloth overcoat, and a grey hat. But vulgar riches were betrayed in the gold buttons to his waistcoat, and a ring worn outside his gloves of purplish kid. He carried a cane with a chased gold knob.

'You will lose your watch,' said his mother as she kissed him.

'It is worn so,' said he, submitting to his father's embrace.

'Well, cousin, so you will soon be a full-blown lawyer?' said Massin.

'I am to be sworn when the courts reopen,' said he, waving an acknowledgment of the friendly greetings of the crowd.

'Then we shall have some fun?' said Goupil, shaking hands with him.

'Ah! there you are, old ape!' answered Désiré.

'Having worked for your license, you think you may take it, I suppose!' retorted the clerk, mortified at being so familiarly treated before so many people.

'For his lies?—Take what?' asked Madame Crémière of her husband.

'You know all my things, Cabirolle!' cried Désiré to the old purple and pimply-faced conductor. 'Have them all taken down to the house.'

'Your horses are in a lather,' said Zélie roughly to Cabirolle. 'Have you no sense at all that you drive them like that? You are a greater brute than they are.'

'But Monsieur Désiré insisted on getting on as fast as possible, to relieve your anxiety.'

'As there had been no accident, why risk killing your horses?' said she.

Friendly greetings, hand-shaking, and the eagerness of his young acquaintance surrounding Désiré, all the incidents of arrival, and details as to the accident which had occasioned the delay, took up so much time that the party of inheritors, increased by their friends, got back to the church just as mass was ended. By a trick of Chance, which allows itself strange caprices, Désiré saw Ursule under the church porch as he passed, and was quite startled by her beauty. The young man paused, and necessarily checked his parents.

Ursule had taken her godfather's arm, which obliged her to hold her prayer-book in her right hand and her

parasol in the left; and in doing so, she displayed the native grace with which graceful women manage to get over the little difficulties of their dainty womanhood. If the mind betrays itself in everything, it may be said that her demeanour expressed her exquisite ingenuousness.

Ursule wore a white muslin dress, shaped loosely like a dressing-gown, with blue bows at intervals; the cape, trimmed with similar ribband run into a wide hem, and fastened like the dress with bows, suggested the beauty of her figure; her throat, of ivory whiteness, was thrown into charming relief by all this blue—the true cosmetic for fair complexions.

A blue sash, with floating ends, marked a girlish waist and what seemed a pliant figure, one of the most seductive graces of woman. She wore a rice-straw hat simply trimmed with ribbands to match those on her dress. It was tied with a bow under her chin; and this, while enhancing the excessive whiteness of the hat, did not detract from that of her lovely complexion.

Her fine, bright hair, which she herself dressed in wide plaits, fastened into loops on each side of her face *à la Berthe*, caught the eye by the shining bosses of the crossing tresses. Her grey eyes, soft, though proud, harmonised with a well-moulded brow. A delicate colour flushed her cheeks like a rosy cloud, and gave life to a face that was regular without being insipid, for nature had bestowed on her the rare privilege of a pure outline with an expressive countenance.

The virtue of her life was written in the perfect accordance of her features, her movements, and the general expression of her individuality, which might serve as a model of Trustfulness or of Modesty.

Her health was excellent, but not coarsely robust, so that she looked elegant. Her light gloves left it to be inferred that she had pretty hands. Her arched and slender feet were shod with dainty little bronze kid boots, trimmed with a fringe of brown silk. Her blue

sash, in which a little flat watch made a boss, while a blue purse with gold tassels hung through it, attracted the eye of every woman there.

'He has given her a new watch,' said Madame Crémière, squeezing her husband's arm.

'Why, it is Ursule!' exclaimed Désiré. 'I did not recognise her.'

'Well, my dear uncle, this is an event!' said the post-master, pointing to where the whole town had fallen into two lines along the old man's way. 'Everybody wants to see you.'

'Is it the Abbé Chaperon or Ursule who has converted you, uncle?' said Massin, bowing with Jesuitical obsequiousness to the doctor and his companion.

'It is Ursule,' said the old man curtly, and without stopping, as a man who is annoyed.

The evening before, as he finished his rubber with Ursule, the town doctor, and Bongrand, he had said, 'I shall go to mass to-morrow'; and even if the Justice had not then replied, 'Your heirs will never have another night's sleep!' a single glance now would have sufficed to enable the sagacious and clear-sighted old man to read the temper of his heirs in the look of their faces. Zélie's irruption into the church, the flash he had caught in her eye, the meeting of all the interested parties on the Square, and the expression of their countenances on seeing Ursule,—all revealed freshly revived hatred and sordid fears.

'This is your doing, Mademoiselle,' said Madame Crémière, interposing with a low curtsey. 'It is no trouble to you to work miracles.'

'The miracle is God's, Madame,' replied Ursule.

'Oh, indeed! God's,' exclaimed Minoret-Levrault. 'My father-in-law used to say that God was a name for many a dark horse.'

'His ideas were those of a horse coper!' said the doctor severely.

'Now, then,' said Minoret to his wife and son, 'are you not coming to pay your respects to my uncle?'

'I could not contain myself face to face with that sneaking slut!' exclaimed Zêlie, leading away her son.

'You would be wise, uncle,' said Madame Massin, 'not to go to church without a little black velvet cap; the parish church is very damp.'

'Pah! niece,' said the old man, looking round at his followers. 'The sooner I am laid to rest, the sooner you will dance.'

He walked on, dragging Ursule with him, and seeming in such haste that they were left to themselves.

'Why do you answer them with such hard words? It is not kind,' said Ursule, shaking his arm with a little refractory gesture.

'My hatred for hypocrites has always been the same, before as well as since my conversion. I have done them all kindness, and I do not ask for gratitude; but not one of all those people sent a flower on your birthday, the only day I keep.'

At some little distance from the doctor and Ursule, Madame de Portenduère was dragging herself along, overwhelmed, as it seemed, with suffering. She was one of those old women in whose dress we may still trace the spirit of the last century, who wear pansy-coloured gowns with tight sleeves of a cut now only to be seen in portraits by Madame Lebrun; black lace scarves, and bonnets of extinct shapes, in harmony with their slow and solemn gait; as if they still walked in hoops, and felt them about them, as those who have had an arm cut off sometimes move the limb they have lost. Their long, pale faces, with deeply shadowed eyes and blighted brows, are not devoid of a certain melancholy grace in spite of a front of dejected curls; they drape their heads in old lace, which now has no light flutter over their cheeks; but over the whole mass of ruins predominates an indescribable dignity of manner and look.

This old lady's red and puckered eyes plainly showed that she had wept during the service. She walked like a person in some anxiety, and seemed to be expecting somebody, for she looked back. Now, that Madame de Portenduère should look back was an event as serious as Doctor Minoret's conversion.

'To whom can Madame de Portenduère owe a grudge?' said Madame Massin, as she came up with the heirs, who were dumbfounded by the doctor's retorts.

'She is looking for the curé,' said Dionis, striking his forehead like a man suddenly struck by a remembrance or some forgotten idea. 'I have it! I see my way; the inheritance is saved! Come, we will all breakfast cheerfully with Madame Minoret.'

The eagerness with which the whole party followed the notary to the posting house may easily be imagined. Goupil clung to his comrade, taking his arm, saying in his ear with a revolting smile: 'There are crayfish!'

'What do I care?' replied the son of the house with a shrug. 'I am madly in love with Florine, the most heavenly creature in the world.'

'What on earth is Florine without a surname?' asked Goupil. 'I am too much your friend to allow you to be made a fool of by hussies.'

'Florine is adored by the famous Nathan, and my folly is of no use, for she positively refuses to marry me.'

'Girls who are rash with their bodies are sometimes prudent with their brains,' said Goupil.

'If you could but see her, only once, you would not make use of such expressions,' said Désiré languishingly.

'If I saw you destroying your prospects for what can be only a fancy,' retorted Goupil, with a warmth that might perhaps have taken in Bongrand, 'I would go and wreck that doll as Varney wrecked Amy Robsart in Kenilworth! Your wife ought to be a d'Aiglemont, a Mademoiselle du Rouvre, and open your way to being a

deputy to the Chamber. My future is mortgaged to yours, and I will not allow you to play the fool.'

'I am rich enough to be content with happiness,' replied Désiré.

'Well, what are you two plotting?' said Zélie to Goupil, hailing the two young men, who were standing together in the wide stable-yard.

The doctor turned down the Rue des Bourgeois, and walked on, as briskly as a young man, to his house, where, in the course of the past week, the strange event had taken place which was just now the ruling thought of all the town of Nemours, and of which some account must be given to render this story, and the notary's remark to the heirs, perfectly intelligible.

The doctor's father-in-law, the famous harpsichord player and instrument-maker, Valentin Mirouët, one of our most celebrated organists, died in 1785, leaving a natural son, the child of his old age, whom he had recognised and called by his name, but who was a thorough scapegrace. He had not the consolation of seeing this spoilt child when on his deathbed; Joseph Mirouët, a singer and a composer, after coming out in Italian opera under an assumed name, had run away to Germany with a young girl. The old instrument-maker recommended this lad, who was full of talent, to his son-in-law, explaining that his object in not marrying the boy's mother was to protect the interests of his daughter, Madame Minoret. The doctor promised to give the unfortunate youth half of the property left by the old man, whose stock and business were bought up by Erard.

He set to work diplomatically to find his natural half-brother, Joseph Mirouët; but one evening Grimm told him that, after enlisting in a Prussian regiment, the artist had deserted, and, taking a false name, had escaped all search.

Joseph Mirouët, gifted by nature with an enchanting

voice, a fine figure, and a handsome face, being a composer of taste and spirit into the bargain, led for fifteen years the Bohemian existence which Hofmann of Berlin has so well described. But at the age of forty he was reduced to such misery that, in 1806, he seized the opportunity of becoming a Frenchman again. He then settled at Hamburg, where he married the daughter of a respectable citizen, who, being music-mad, fell in love with the singer whose fame was still in the future, and who devoted herself to its attainment. But after fifteen years of penury, Joseph Mirouët's head could not stand the wine of opulence; his extravagant nature reasserted itself; and though he made his wife happy, in a few years he had spent all her fortune. Misery again came upon them. The household must indeed have been living wretchedly for Joseph Mirouët to come down to enlisting as one of the band in a French regiment.

In 1813, by the merest chance, the surgeon-major of this regiment, struck by the name of Mirouët, wrote to Doctor Minoret, to whom he owed some obligation. The reply came at once. In 1814, before the capitulation of Paris, Joseph Mirouët had found a home there, and there his wife died in giving birth to a little girl, whom the doctor named Ursule, after his wife. The bandmaster did not long survive his wife; he, like her, was worn out by fatigue and privation. On his deathbed the hapless musician bequeathed his little girl to the doctor, who was her godfather, in spite of his repugnance for what he called Church mummeries.

After losing every child, either by miscarriage, at the time of its birth, or within the first year of its life, the doctor had anxiously looked forward to their last hope. But when a sickly, nervous, delicate woman begins with a miscarriage, it is common enough to see her successive failures, as in the case of Ursule Minoret, in spite of her husband's care, watchfulness, and learning. The poor man had often blamed himself for their persistent desire

to have children. The last of the little ones born to them, after an interval of more than two years, died in 1792, the victim of constitutional nervousness, inherited from its mother, if we may believe the physiologists, who say that, in the inscrutable phenomena of generation, a child takes its blood from the father and its nervous system from the mother. The doctor, compelled to forgo the joys of his strongest feelings, no doubt found in benevolence some indemnity for disappointed fatherhood.

All through his married life, so cruelly agitated, he had wished above everything for a little fair girl, one of those flowers which are the delight of a household; so he gladly accepted his half-brother's bequest, and transferred all his vanished hopes and dreams to the little orphan. For two years he watched over the minutest details of Ursule's life, as Cato over Pompey; he would not have her fed, or taken up, or put to bed without his superintendence. His experience and his science were all devoted to this child. After enduring all the pangs, the alternations of fear and hope, the anxieties and joys of a mother, he was so happy as to find vigorous vitality and a deeply sensitive nature in this child of the flaxen-haired German mother and the artistic Frenchman. The happy old man watched the growth of that yellow hair with the feelings of a mother—first pale down, then silk, then light, fine hair, so caressing to the touch of caressing fingers. He would kiss the tiny feet, the toes through whose fine skin the blood shows pink, making them look like rosebuds. He was crazy over the child.

When she tried to speak, or when she fixed her lovely, soft blue eyes on the objects about her, with the wondering look which would seem to be the dawning of ideas, and which she ended with a laugh, he would sit in front of her for whole hours, and he and Jordy would try to find out the reasons—which to many have seemed

mere caprices—concealed under the smallest manifestations of that delightful phase of life when the child is at once flower and fruit, a bewildered intelligence, perpetual motion, and vehement desire. Little Ursule's beauty and sweetness made her so precious to the doctor that for her he would gladly have changed the laws of nature; he would sometimes tell his friend Jordy that he suffered from pain in his teeth when Ursule was cutting hers.

When old men love a child there is no limit to their passion; they adore it. For this tiny creature's sake they silence their pet manias, and recall every detail of their past life. Their experience, their forbearance, their patience, all the acquisitions of life—a treasure so painfully amassed—are poured out for this young life by which they grow young again, and they make up for motherliness by intelligence. Their wisdom, always on the alert, is as good as a mother's intuition; they remember the exquisite care which in a mother is divination, and infuse it into the exercise of a pitifulness whose strength is great, no doubt, in proportion to that excessive weakness. The slowness of their movements supplies the place of maternal gentleness. And then, in them, as in children, life is reduced to the simplest expression; if a mother is a slave from feeling, the negation of all passion and the absence of all self-interest allow the old man to sacrifice himself wholly. Hence it is not uncommon to see children and old men make great friends.

The old officer, the old curé, and the old doctor, happy in Ursule's caresses and caprices, were never tired of answering her or playing with her. Her childish petulance, far from fretting them, was their delight; and they indulged all her desires, while making everything a subject of instruction. Thus the little girl grew up in the midst of old men, who smiled on her, and were to her like so many mothers, all equally attentive and watchful. Thanks to this learned education, Ursule's soul developed in a congenial sphere. This rare plant found the soil

that suited it, inhaled the elements of its true life, and assimilated the flood of its native sunshine.

'In what faith will you bring this child up?' asked the Abbé Chaperon of Minoret, when Ursule was six years old.

'In yours,' replied the doctor.

He, an atheist after the pattern of Monsieur de Wolmar in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, did not see that he had any right to deprive Ursule of the benefits offered by the Catholic faith.

The physician, just then sitting on a bench outside the window of the Chinese summer-house, felt his hand warmly pressed by that of the curé.

'Yes, Curé, whenever she asks me about God, I shall refer her to her friend "Sapron,"' said he, mimicking Ursule's baby accent. 'I wish to see whether religious feeling is innate. So far, therefore, I have done nothing either for or against the tendencies of this young soul; but I have already, in my heart, appointed you her spiritual director.'

'It will be accounted to you by God, I trust!' said the curé, gently patting his hands together, and raising them to heaven, as though he were putting up a short mental prayer.

So, at the age of six, the little orphan came under the religious influence of the curé, as she had already under that of her old friend Jordy.

The captain, formerly a professor in one of the old military schools, and interested in grammar and the divergencies of European tongues, had studied the problem of an universal language. This learned man, patient as all old teachers are, made it his pleasure to teach Ursule to read and write, instructing her in French, and in so much arithmetic as it was needful that she should know. The doctor's extensive library allowed of a choice of books fit to be read by a child, and adapted to amuse as well as to instruct her. The soldier and the

priest left her mind to develop naturally and easily, as the doctor left her body. Ursule learned in play. Religion included reflection.

Thus left to the Divine culture of a nature guided by these three judicious teachers into a realm of purity, Ursule tended towards feeling rather than duty, and took as her rule of life the voice of conscience rather than social law. In her, beauty of sentiment and action would always be spontaneous ; her judgment would come in to confirm the impulse of her heart. She was fated to do right as a pleasure before doing it as an obligation. This tone is the peculiar result of a Christian education. These principles, quite unlike those to be inculcated in a man, are suited to a woman, the soul and conscience of the family, the latent elegance of home life, the queen, or little less, of the household.

They all three acted in the same manner with this child. Far from being startled by the audacity of childish innocence, they explained to Ursule the purpose of things and their known processes, without ever giving her an inaccurate impression. When in her questioning about a plant, a flower, or a star, she went directly to God, the professor and the doctor alike told her that only the curé could answer her. Neither of them intruded on the ground of the other. Her godfather took charge of her physical progress and the matters of daily life ; her lessons were Jordy's affair ; morality, metaphysics, and all higher matters were left to the curé.

This excellent education was not counteracted by bad servants, as is sometimes the case in wealthier houses. La Bougival, well lectured on the subject—and, indeed, far too simple in mind and nature to interfere—did nothing to mar the work of these great spirits.

Thus Ursule, a privileged creature, had to nurture her three good genii, who found their task easy and pleasant with so sweet a nature as hers. This manly tenderness, this seriousness tempered by smiles, this freedom without

risk, this incessant care of mind and body, had made her, at the age of nine, a delightful and lovely child. Then, unfortunately, the fatherly trio was broken up. In the following year the old captain died, leaving it to the doctor and the curé to carry on his work, after he had achieved the most difficult part of it. Flowers would spring up naturally in a soil so well prepared. The good gentleman had, during these nine years, saved a thousand francs a year, and left ten thousand francs to his little Ursule, that she might have something to remember him by all her life through. In his will, full of pathetic feeling, he begged his legatee to spend the four or five hundred francs a year of interest on this little capital exclusively on dress.

When the Justice placed seals on his old friend's possessions, he found, in a closet which no one had ever been allowed to enter, a quantity of toys, most of them broken, and all used; toys of the past, piously treasured, which Monsieur Bongrand himself was to burn, by the poor captain's desire.

Not long after this, Ursule was to take her first communion. The Abbé Chaperon devoted a whole year to instructing the young girl, in whom heart and brain, so early developed, but so wisely dependent on each other, required a specific spiritual nourishment. And this initiation into a knowledge of divine things was of such a nature that from this period, when the soul takes its religious mould, Ursule became a pious and mystical young creature, whose character was always superior to events, and whose heart could triumph over adversity. Then it was that a secret struggle began between infidel old age and fully-believing youth; a struggle of which she who had challenged it was long unaware, but of which the issue had set the town by the ears, while it was destined to have great influence on Ursule's future life, by unchaining against her the doctor's collateral relations.

During the first six months of the year 1824 Ursule almost always spent the morning at the curé's house. The old doctor divined the Abbé's intention ; he wanted to make Ursule herself an invincible argument. The unbeliever, beloved by his goddaughter as though she were his own child, would believe in her simplicity, and be attracted by the touching effects of religion in the soul of a girl whose love, like the trees of the tropical forest, was always loaded with flowers and fruit, always fresh, and always fragrant. A beautiful life is more powerful than the most cogent arguments. It is impossible to resist the charm of certain images. And the doctor's eyes filled with tears, he knew not why, when he saw the child of his heart set out for church dressed in a frock of white gauze, with white satin shoes, graced with white ribbons, a fillet of white round her head tied on one side with a large bow, her hair rippling in a thousand waves over her pretty white shoulders, her bodice trimmed with a pleating mixed with narrow bows, her eyes shining like stars, from new hopes, loving her godfather all the more since her soul had risen to God. When he perceived the idea of eternity supplying nourishment to the soul hitherto wrapped in the darkness of childhood, as the sun brings life to the world after the night is past, he felt vexed to remain alone at home, still without knowing why. Seated on the balcony steps, his eyes remained long fixed on the bars of the gate through which his godchild had passed, saying, 'Why are you not coming too, godfather ? Am I to be happy without you ?'

Though shaken to the foundations, the encyclopedist's pride did not at once give way. However, he went out to look at the little procession, and saw his little Ursule radiant with exaltation under her veil. She flashed an inspired look at him, which struck to the stoniest corner of his heart, the spot closed against God. Still the deist was firm. 'Mummery !' he said to himself. 'To

imagine that if a Maker of worlds exists, such an Organiser of infinitude can trouble Himself about this foolish trumpery!'

He laughed, and pursued his walk along the heights which overhang the road through the Gatinais, where the church bells, ringing loud peals, announced the gladness of many a home.

The clatter of backgammon is intolerable to those who do not know the game, one of the most difficult that exist. Not to disturb his little girl—whose extreme delicacy of ear and nerves did not allow of her enduring this rattle and their talk without apparent meaning—the curé, old Jordy during his lifetime, and Doctor Minoret postponed their game till the child was in bed or out walking. It often happened that it was unfinished when she came in again, and she then submitted with the best possible grace, and sat down by the window to sew. She disliked the game, which at the beginning is no doubt dry and dull, to many minds repellent, and so difficult to master, that those who have not become accustomed to it in their youth find it almost impossible to learn in later life.

Now on the evening after her first communion, when Ursule came back to her guardian and found him alone for that day, she set the backgammon board in front of the old man.

'Now, whose throw will it be?' said she.

'Ursule,' said the doctor, 'is it not sinful to make game of your godfather on the very day of your first communion?'

'I am not making game,' said she, seating herself. 'I must think of your pleasure—you who are always thinking of mine. Whenever Monsieur Chaperon was pleased with me, he gave me a lesson in backgammon, and he has given me so many that I am prepared to beat you. You will not have to put yourself to inconvenience for me. I have conquered every difficulty, not to interfere

with your amusement, and I really like the rattle of the dice.'

Ursule won the game. The curé came in, taking them by surprise, and enjoyed her triumph.

Next day Minoret, who had hitherto refused to allow the girl to learn music, went to Paris, bought a piano, and made arrangements with a mistress at Fontainebleau, submitting to the annoyance which Ursule's constant practising could not fail to cause him. One of his lost friend Jordy's phrenological prognostics proved true—the girl became an excellent musician. The doctor, proud of his goddaughter, now got an old German named Schmucke, a learned professor of music, to come from Paris once a week, and paid the cost of an art which he had at first contemned as perfectly useless in home-life. Unbelievers do not love music, that heavenly language worked out by Catholicism, which found the names of the seven notes in one of its hymns. Each note is called by the first syllable of the seven first lines of the hymn to Saint John.

The impression produced on the old man by Ursule's first communion, though vivid, was transient. The calm contentment which acts of resolution and prayer diffused in her young soul were also examples of which he took no account. Minoret, having no subjects for remorse or repentance, enjoyed perfect serenity of mind. Doing all his acts of benevolence without any hope of an eternal harvest, he thought himself superior to the Catholic, who, as he always said, was merely making a profitable bargain with God.

'And yet,' the Abbé Chaperon would say, 'if all men went in for this business, you must admit that society might be perfect. There would be no more misery. To be benevolent on your lines, a man must be a great philosopher. You raise yourself to your principles by reason—you are a social exception; now you need only be a Christian to be benevolent on

ours. With you it is an effort; with us it is natural.'

'Which is as much as to say, curé, that I think and you feel. That is all.'

Meanwhile, having reached the age of twelve, Ursule, whose womanly tact and shrewdness were brought into play by a superior education, and whose sense, now in its blossom, was enlightened by a religious spirit, fully understood that her godfather believed not in a future life, nor in the immortality of the soul, nor in Providence, nor in God. The doctor, pressed by her innocent questioning, found it impossible any longer to hide the terrible secret. Ursule's naïve consternation at first made him smile; but then, seeing that she was sometimes sad, he understood how great an affection this dejection revealed. Unqualified love has a horror of every kind of discord, even in things which have no connection with itself. The old man would sometimes lend himself, as to a caress, to the arguments of his adopted child, spoken in a gentle and tender voice, and the outcome of the most pure and ardent feeling. But believers and unbelievers speak two different languages, and cannot understand each other. The young girl in pleading the cause of God was hard upon her godfather, as a spoilt child is sometimes hard upon its mother. The curé gently reproved her, telling her that God reserved to Himself the power of humbling such proud spirits. The young girl answered the Abbé by saying that David slew Goliath. These religious differences, these sorrows of the child who longed to lead her guardian to God, were the only griefs of their home-life, so simple and so full, and hidden from the gaze of the inquisitive little town.

Ursule grew up and developed into the modest, Christianly-trained maiden whom Désiré had admired as she came out of church. The culture of the flowers in the garden, music, amusing her guardian and all the attentions she paid him—for Ursule had relieved La

Bougival by taking care of the old man—all filled up the hours, days, and months of this tranquil existence. For a year past, indeed, some little ailments of Ursule's had made the doctor anxious; but they did not disturb him beyond making him watchful of her health. Meanwhile, however, the sagacious observer and experienced practitioner fancied he could discern that to her physical disorders there was some corresponding disturbance in her mind. He watched her with a mother's eye, but seeing no one in their circle worthy to inspire her with love, he made himself easy.

Under these circumstances, just a month before the day when this drama had its beginning, an event occurred in the doctor's intellectual life—one of those incidents which plough into the subsoil, so to speak, of our convictions, and turn up its very depths. But it will first be necessary to give a brief account of some facts of his medical career, which will also lend fresh interest to this narrative.

At the end of the eighteenth century science was as deeply rent by the apparition of Mesmer as art was by that of Gluck. After his rediscovery of magnetism, Mesmer came to France, whither from time immemorial inventors have resorted to find protection for their discoveries. France, thanks to the lucidity of her language, is as it were the trumpeter of the world.

'If homœopathy gets to Paris, it is safe!' said Hahnemann.

'Go to France,' said Metternich to Gall, 'and if they laugh at your "bumps," you are a made man.'

Mesmer, then, had his disciples and his antagonists, as ardent as the Piccinists against the Gluckists. Scientific France was stirred, and a serious debate was set on foot. Until judgment should be pronounced, the Faculty of Medicine, in a body, proscribed what they called Mesmer's quackery, his tub, his conducting wires, and

his theories. But it must be said that the German compromised his splendid discovery by preposterous pecuniary demands. Mesmer failed through unproven facts, through his ignorance of the part played in nature by imponderable fluids not as yet investigated, and through his inability to study all sides of a science which has three aspects. Magnetism has more applications; in Mesmer's hands it was in relation to its future development what a principle is to results. But though the discoverer lacked genius, it is sad for human reason and for France to have to own that a science contemporaneous with the earliest civilisation, cultivated in Egypt and Chaldea, in Greece and in India, met in Paris at the high tide of the eighteenth century with the same fate as the truth embodied in Galileo in the sixteenth; and that magnetism was put out of court by the twofold attainder of religious believers and of materialist philosophers, both equally alarmed. Magnetism, the favourite science of Jesus, and one of the powers conferred on the apostles, seems to have been as little recognised by the Church as by the followers of Jean-Jacques and Voltaire, of Locke and Condillac. Neither the Encyclopedia nor the priesthood could come to terms with this ancient human force which seemed to them so novel. The miracles of the *convulsionnaires* were smothered by the Church and by the indifference of the learned, in spite of the valuable works of Carré de Montgeron; still, they were the first summons to make experiments on the fluids in the human body which supply the power of calling up enough spontaneous forces to nullify the pain caused by an external agency. But it would have necessitated the recognition of fluids that are intangible, invisible, and imponderable, the three negations which science at that time regarded as the definition of a vacuum.

To modern science a vacuum is impossible. Given ten feet of vacuum, and the world is in ruins! To materialists especially the world is absolutely full, every-

thing is closely linked and connected, and acts mechanically.

'The world,' said Diderot, 'as a result of mere chance is more intelligible than God. The multiplicity of causes, and the immeasurable number of throws that chance presupposes, sufficiently account for creation. Given the *Æneid* and all the letters necessary to set it up, if you grant me time and space, by dint of tossing the letters, I should bring out the combination forming the *Æneid*.' These wretched men, who would deify everything rather than confess a God, shrank no less from the infinite divisibility of matter which is implied in the nature of an imponderable force. Locke and Condillac at that time delayed by fifty years the immense advance which natural science is now making under the conception of unity which we owe to the great Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire.

Some honest minds, devoid of system, convinced by the facts they had conscientiously studied, persisted in holding the doctrine of Mesmer, who discerned the existence in man of a penetrating influence, giving one individual power over another, and brought into play by the will; an influence which is curative when the fluid is abundant, and which acts as a duel between two wills—the evil to be cured, and the will to cure it. The phenomena of somnambulism, hardly suspected by Mesmer, were detected by MM. de Puységur and Deleuze; but the Revolution brought a pause in these discoveries, which left the men of learning and the scoffers in possession of the field.

Among the small number of believers were some physicians; these seceders were persecuted by their brethren till the day of their death. The respectable faculty of doctors in Paris turned against the Mesmerists with all the rigour of a religious warfare, and were as cruel in their hatred as it was possible to be in a period of Voltairean tolerance. The orthodox physicians refused to meet in consultation with those who adhered to the

Mesmerian heresy. In 1820 these reputed heresiarchs were still the object of this unformulated proscription. The disasters and storms of the Revolution did not extinguish this scientific hostility. None but priests, lawyers, and physicians can hate in this way. The 'gown' is always terrible. But are not ideas certain to be more implacable than things? Doctor Bouvard, a friend of Minoret's, accepted the new creed, and to his dying day persisted in the scientific faith to which he sacrificed the peace of his whole life—for he was the pet aversion of the Paris Faculty. Minoret, one of the bravest supporters of the encyclopedists, and the most redoubtable adversary of Deslon, Mesmer's chief disciple, since his pen had great weight in this dispute, quarrelled beyond remedy with his old comrade; he did worse, he persecuted him. His behaviour to Bouvard must have caused him the only repentance that can have clouded the serenity of his declining life.

Since Doctor Minoret's retirement to Nemours, the science of imponderable agents—the only name applicable to magnetism of which the phenomena ally it so closely with electricity and light—had made immense progress, in spite of the unfailing mockery of the Paris world of science. Phrenology and physiognomy, the sciences of Gall and Lavater, twins, of which one is to the other as cause to effect, demonstrated to the eyes of more than one physiologist certain traces of the intangible fluid which is the basis of the phenomena of human will, giving rise to passions and habits, to the forms of the features and of the skull. Magnetic facts too, the miracles of somnambulism, and those of divination and ecstasy, allowing us to enter into the world of spirit, were multiplying. The strange tale of the apparitions seen by Martin, a farmer, which were amply proved, and that peasant's interview with Louis XVIII.; the statements as to Swedenborg's intercourse with the dead, seriously accepted in Germany; Walter Scott's narratives of the results of second sight; the amazing faculties displayed by some fortune-tellers, who

combined into one science chiromancy, card-reading, and horoscopy; the facts of catalepsy, and of the peculiar action of the diaphragm under certain morbid influences; all these phenomena, curious, to say the least, and all emanating from the same source, undermined much doubt, and led the most indifferent into the province of experiment. Minoret knew nothing of this movement of minds, vast in Northern Europe, though still small in France, where, nevertheless, certain facts occurred which superficial observers called marvellous, but which fell like stones to the bottom of the sea in the whirlpool of events in Paris.

At the beginning of this year the anti-Mesmerist was greatly disturbed by receiving the following letter:—

'My old Comrade,—Every friendship, even a lost friendship, has rights which it is not easy to set aside. I know that you are still alive, and I remember less of our hostilities than of our happy days in the little dens of Saint-Julien-le-pauvre. Now that I am about to quit this world, I cling to a hope of proving to you that magnetism is destined to be one of the most important of sciences—unless, indeed, all science should not be regarded as *one*. I can wreck your incredulity by positive proofs. Perhaps I may gain from your curiosity the happiness of once more clasping your hand as we used to clasp hands before the days of Mesmer.—Always yours,

Bouvard.'

The anti-Mesmerist, stung as a lion by a gadfly, rushed off to Paris and left his card on old Bouvard, who lived in the Rue Férou, near Saint Sulpice. Bouvard sent a card to his hotel, writing on it, 'To-morrow, at nine o'clock, Rue St. Honoré, opposite the Church of the Assumption.'

Minoret, grown young again, did not sleep. He went to call on the old physicians of his acquaintance, and asked them if the world were turned upside down, if

there were still a School of Medicine, and if the four Faculties still existed. The doctors reassured him by telling him that the old spirit of resistance still survived; only, instead of persecuting the new science, the Academies of Medicine and of Sciences roared with laughter, and classed magnetic demonstrations with the tricks of Comus, Comte, and Bosco, as jugglery, sleight-of-hand, and what is known as amusing physics.

These speeches did not hinder Minoret from going to the rendezvous appointed by old Bouvard. After forty-four years of alienation the antagonists met again under a courtyard gate in the Rue St. Honoré.

Frenchmen live in too constant a change to hate each other very long. In Paris, especially, events expand space and make life so wide—in politics, in science, and in literature—that men cannot fail to find countries in it to conquer where their demands find room to dwell and rule. Hatred requires so many forces always in arms that those who mean to hate persistently begin with a good supply. And then, only bodies of men can bear it in mind. At the end of forty-four years Robespierre and Danton would fall on each other's neck.

Neither of the two doctors, however, offered to shake hands. Bouvard was the first to say to Minoret (with the familiar *tu* of French good-fellowship)—

'You are looking very well.'

'Yes, not so badly; and you?' said Minoret, the ice being broken.

'I—as you see me.'

'Has magnetism kept you from dying?' asked Minoret in a bantering tone, but not bitterly.

'No; but it has almost kept me from living.'

'You are not rich then?' said Minoret.

'Rich!' said Bouvard.

'Well, but I am rich!' cried Minoret.

'It is not your fortune, but your conviction, that I aim at.—Come,' replied Bouvard.

'Obstinate fellow!' exclaimed Minoret.

The believer in Mesmer led his incredulous friend into a dark stairway, and made him mount cautiously to the fourth floor.

At this time there was in Paris an extraordinary man, endowed by faith with stupendous powers, and a master of magnetic forces in every form of their application. Not only did this Great Unknown, who is still living, cure unaided, and at any distance, the most painful and inveterate diseases—cure them suddenly and radically, as of old did the Redeemer of man—but he also could produce at any moment the most curious phenomena of somnambulism by quelling the most refractory wills. The countenance of the Unknown, who, like Swedenborg, declares himself to be commissioned by God and in communion with the angels, is that of a lion; it is radiant with concentrated and irresistible energy. His features, of a singular cast, have a terrible and overwhelming power; his voice, coming from the depths of his being, seems charged with magnetic fluid, and enters the listener by every pore.

Disgusted with the ingratitude of the public after thousands of cures, he had thrown himself into unapproachable solitude, voluntary annihilation. His all-powerful hand, which has restored dying daughters to their mothers, fathers to their weeping children, adored mistresses to lovers crazed with love; which has cured the sick when physicians have given them over, and caused thanksgivings to be sung in the synagogue, in the conventicle, and in the church, by priests of different creeds, all brought to the same God by the same miracle; which has mitigated the agony of death to those for whom life was no longer possible—that sovereign hand, the sun of life which dazzled the closed eyes of the sleep-walker, he now would not lift to restore the heir of a kingdom to a queen. Wrapped in the memory of the good he has done as in a luminous shroud

he has shut his door on the world, and dwells in the skies.

But, in the early days of his reign, almost startled by his own powers, this man, whose disinterestedness was as great as his influence, allowed a few inquirers to witness his miracles. The rumour of his fame, which had been immense, and which might revive any day, aroused Doctor Bouvard on the brink of the tomb. The persecuted believer in Mesmer could at last behold the most brilliant manifestation of the science he cherished, like a treasure, in his heart. The old man's misfortunes had touched the Great Unknown, who granted him certain privileges. So Bouvard, as they climbed the stairs, took his old adversary's banter with malicious satisfaction. He made no reply but, 'You will see, you will see,' with the little tosses of the head that mark a man sure of his case.

The two doctors entered a suite of rooms of the plainest simplicity. Bouvard went to speak with the master for a moment in a bedroom adjoining the drawing-room, where he left Minoret, whose distrust was now aroused. But Bouvard immediately came back, and led him into the bedroom, where he found the famous Swedenborgian with a woman seated in an armchair. The woman did not rise, and seemed not to observe the arrival of the two old men.

'What, no tub?' said Minoret, with a smile.

'Nothing but the power of God,' gravely replied the Swedenborgian, whom Minoret supposed to be a man of about fifty.

The three men sat down, and the stranger made conversation. They spoke of the weather and indifferent matters, to old Minoret's great surprise; he fancied he was being fooled. The Swedenborgian questioned his visitor as to his scientific views, and was evidently taking time to study him.

'You have come here out of pure curiosity, Monsieur,' he said at length. 'I am not in the habit of prostituting a

power which, it is my full conviction, emanates from God; if I made a frivolous or evil use of it, it might be taken from me. However, Monsieur Bouvard tells me our aim is to be the conversion of an opinion antagonistic to ours, and the enlightenment of a man of learning and good faith. I shall therefore satisfy you. The woman you see there,' he went on, pointing to the armchair, 'is in a magnetic sleep. From the accounts and revelations of all such somnambulists, the state is one of great beatitude, during which the inner being, set free from the fetters by which visible nature hinders the full exercise of its faculties, wanders through the world which we erroneously call invisible. Sight and hearing are then far more perfectly active than in the state which we call being awake, and independent, perhaps, of the medium of those organs which are but as a sheath to the blades of light that we call sight and hearing. To a man in that condition distance and material obstacles have ceased to exist, or are pierced through by an internal vitality of which our body is the container, the necessary fulcrum, a mere wrapper. Terms are lacking for results so recently rediscovered; for the words imponderable, intangible, invisible, have no meaning in relation to the fluid whose action is perceptible through magnetism. Light is ponderable by heat, which, when it penetrates a body, increases its volume; and electricity is only too tangible. We have passed judgment on things instead of blaming the imperfection of our instruments.'

'She is asleep?' asked Minoret, examining the woman, who seemed to him of the lower class.

'Her body is in a certain sense annihilated,' replied the Swedenborgian. 'Ignorant persons mistake this state for sleep. But she will prove to you that there is a spiritual world, where the spirit does not obey the laws of the physical universe. I will send her to any region whither you may choose that she shall go, twenty leagues away, or as far as China; she will tell you what is happening there.'

'Send her only to my house at Nemours,' replied Minoret.

'I will not interfere between you,' said the mysterious man. 'Give me your hand; you shall be at once actor and spectator, cause and effect.'

He took Minoret's hand, Minoret yielding; he held it for a minute with an apparent concentration of thought, and with his other hand he took that of the woman in the chair; then he placed the doctor's hand in the woman's, signing to the old sceptic to sit down by the side of this Pythoness without a tripod. Minoret observed a slight thrill in the excessively calm face of the woman when the Swedenborgian placed them in contact; but the movement, though marvellous in its results, was in itself extremely simple.

'Obey this gentleman,' said the Unknown, extending his hand over the head of the woman, who seemed to inhale light and life from him. 'And remember that all you do for him will please me.—Now, you can speak to her,' he said to Minoret.

'Go to Nemours, Rue des Bourgeois, to my house,' said the doctor.

'Give her time; hold her hand till she shows by what she says that she is there,' said Bouvard to his old friend.

'I see a river,' replied the woman in a low voice, and seeming to be looking attentively within herself, in spite of her closed eyes. 'I see a pretty garden.'

'Why have you begun by the river and the garden?' asked Minoret.

'Because they are in the garden.'

'Who?'

'The young lady and her nurse, of whom you are thinking.'

'What is the garden like?' asked Minoret.

'As you go into it by the steps that lead to the river there is a long gallery to the right, built of brick, in which I see books, and at the end there is a little gazebo

trimmed up with wooden bells and red eggs. The wall on the left is covered with creepers—Virginia creeper and yellow jasmine. There is a little sundial in the middle; there are a great many pots of flowers. Your ward is looking at the flowers and showing them to her nurse; she makes holes with a dibble and sows some seeds. The nurse is raking the path. Though the girl is as pure as an angel, there is a dawning of love in her, as faint as the first light of morning.'

'For whom?' asked the doctor, who had so far heard nothing that any one might not have told him without being clairvoyant. He still believed it was a trick.

'You know nothing of it, though you were somewhat anxious not long since as she grew up,' said the woman, smiling. 'The instincts of her heart followed the development of her nature.'

'And it is quite a common woman who speaks thus?' exclaimed the old doctor.

'In this state they all speak with peculiar lucidity,' replied Bouvard.

'But who is it that Ursule loves?'

'Ursule does not know that she is in love,' answered the woman, with a little shake of her head. 'She is too angelically innocent to be conscious of desire, or of love in any kind; but she wonders over him, she thinks of him; she even forbids herself to do so, and returns in spite of her determination to avoid it.—Now she is at the piano——'

'But who is he?'

'The son of the lady who lives opposite.'

'Madame de Portenduère?'

'Portenduère, did you say?' replied the clairvoyante. 'I daresay. But there is no danger; he is not at home.'

'Have they ever spoken to each other?'

'Never. They have looked at each other. She thinks him charming. And he really is very good-looking, and he has a good heart. She has watched him out

of her window, and they have seen each other at church; but the young man thinks no more about it.'

'What is his name?'

'I cannot tell you unless I should read it or hear it. ——His name is Savinien; she has just spoken it; she likes the sound of it; she had looked in the calendar for his saint's day, and had marked it with a tiny red spot. Childish! Oh, she will love very truly, and with a love as pure as it is strong. She is not the girl to love twice; love will colour her whole soul, and fill it so completely, that she will reject every other feeling.'

'Where do you see that?'

'I see it in her. She will know how to bear suffering; she has inherited that power, for her father and mother suffered much.'

The last words overset the doctor, who was surprised rather than shaken. It is desirable to note that ten or fifteen minutes passed between each of the woman's statements; during these her attention became more and more self-centred. He could see that she saw! Her brow showed peculiar changes; internal effort was to be seen there; it cleared or was knit by a power whose effects Minoret had never seen but in dying people at the moment when the prophetic spirit is upon them. She not unfrequently made gestures reminding him of Ursule.

'Oh, question her,' said the mysterious master to Minoret. 'She will tell you secrets that none but yourself can know.'

'Does Ursule love me?' said Minoret.

'Almost as she loves God,' replied the sleeper, with a smile. 'And she is very unhappy about your infidelity. You do not believe in God, as if you could hinder His being! His voice fills the world! And so you are the cause of the poor child's only distress.—There! she is playing her scales; she wishes to be a better musician than she is, and is vexed with herself. What she thinks

is: "If I only could sing well, if I had a fine voice, when he was at his mother's it would be sure to reach his ears!"'

Doctor Minoret took out a notebook and wrote down the exact hour.

'Can you tell me what seeds she has sown?'

'Mignonette, sweet peas, balsams——'

'And lastly?'

'Larkspur.'

'Where is my money?'

'At your lawyer's; but you invest as it comes in without losing a day's interest.'

'Yes; but where is the money I keep at home for the half-yearly housekeeping?'

'You keep it in a large book bound in red, called "The Pandects of Justinian," vol. ii., between the two last pages; the book is above the sideboard with glass doors, in the division for folios. There is a whole row of them. The money is in the last volume at the end next the drawing-room.—By the way, vol. iii. is placed before vol. ii. But it is not money—it is in——'

'Thousand franc notes?' asked the doctor.

'I cannot see clearly; they are folded up.—No, there are two notes for five hundred francs each.'

'You can see them?'

'Yes.'

'What are they like?'

'One is old, and very yellow; the other is white, and almost new.'

This last part of the interview left Doctor Minoret thunderstruck. He looked at Bouvard in blank amazement; but Bouvard and the Swedenborgian, who were accustomed to the astonishment of sceptics, were conversing in an undertone, without showing any surprise or amazement.

Minoret begged them to allow him to return after dinner. The anti-Mesmerist wanted to think it over, to

shake off his extreme terror, so as to test once more this immense power, to submit it to some decisive experiment, and ask some questions which, if answered, could leave no shadow of a doubt.

'Be here by nine o'clock,' said the Unknown. 'I shall be at your service.'

Minoret was so violently agitated that he went away without taking leave, followed by Bouvard, who called after him—

'Well? Well?'

'I believe I am mad,' replied Minoret, as they reached the outer door. 'If that woman has told the truth about Ursule, as there is no one on earth but Ursule who can know what the sorceress has revealed—*you are right.* I only wish I had wings to fly to Nemours and verify her statements. But I will hire a post-chaise and start at ten this evening. Oh! I am going crazy!'

'What would you think, then, if you had known a man incurable for years made perfectly well in five seconds; if you could see that great magnetiser make a leper sweat profusely; or make a crippled woman walk?'

'Let us dine together, Bouvard, and stay with me till nine o'clock. I want to devise some decisive and irrefutable test.'

'Certainly, old friend,' replied the Mesmerian doctor.

The reconciled enemies went to dine at the Palais Royal. After an eager conversation, which helped Minoret to escape from the turmoil of ideas that racked his brain, Bouvard said to him—

'If you discern in this woman a real power to annihilate space, if you can but convince yourself that she, here, from the Church of the Assumption, can see and hear what is going on at Nemours, you must then admit all other effects of magnetism; they are to a sceptic quite as impossible as these. Ask her, therefore, one single proof that may satisfy you, for you may imagine that we have procured all this information.

But we cannot possibly know, for instance, what will happen this evening at nine o'clock in your house, in your ward's bedroom. Remember or write down exactly what the clairvoyante may tell you, and hasten home. Little Ursule, whom I never saw, is not our accomplice; and if she shall have done or said what you will have written down, bow thy head, proud Infidel!'

The two friends returned to the Swedenborgian's rooms, and there found the woman, who did not recognise Doctor Minoret. Her eyes gently closed under the hand which the master stretched out to her from afar, and she sank into the attitude in which Minoret had seen her before dinner. When his hand and hers were placed in connection he desired her to tell him all that was happening in his house at Nemours at that moment.

'What is Ursule doing?' he asked.

'She is in her dressing-gown; she has finished putting in her curl-papers; she is kneeling on her prie-Dieu in front of an ivory crucifix fastened on to a panel of red velvet.'

'What is she saying?'

'Her evening prayers; she commends herself to God; she beseeches Him to keep her soul free from evil thoughts; she examines her conscience, going over all she has done during the day to see whether she has failed in obedience to His commandments or those of the Church; she is stripping her heart bare, poor dear little thing.' There were tears in the clairvoyante's eyes. 'She has committed no sin; but she blames herself for having thought too much of Monsieur Savinien,' she went on. 'She stops to wonder what he is doing in Paris, and prays to God to make him happy. She ends with you, and says a prayer aloud.'

'Can you repeat it?'

'Yes.'

Minoret took out his pencil and wrote at the woman's dictation the following prayer, evidently composed by the Abbé Chaperon—

'O God, if Thou art pleased with Thy handmaid, who adores Thee and beseeches Thee with all love and fervour, who strives not to wander from Thy holy commandments, who would gladly die, as Thy Son died, to glorify Thy Name, who would fain live under Thy shadow, Thou to whom all hearts are open, grant me the mercy that my godfather's eyes may be unsealed, lead him into the way of life, and give him Thy grace, that he may dwell in Thee during his latter days; preserve him from all ill, and let me suffer in his stead! Holy Saint Ursule, my beloved patron Saint, and Thou, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, Archangels, and Saints in Paradise, hear me; join your intercessions to mine, and have pity on us!'

The clairvoyante so exactly imitated the child's innocent gestures and saintly aspirations that Doctor Minoret's eyes filled with tears.

'Does she say anything more?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Repeat it.'

'"Dear godfather! Whom will he play backgammon with in Paris?"—She has blown out her light, lays down her head, and goes to sleep.—She is gone off! She looks so pretty in her little night-cap!'

Minoret took leave of the Great Unknown, shook hands with Bouvard, ran downstairs, and hurried off to a stand of coaches, which at that time existed under the gateway of a mansion since demolished to make way for the Rue d'Alger. He there found a driver, and asked him if he would set out forthwith for Fontainebleau. The price having been agreed on, the old man, made young again, set out that very minute. As agreed, he let the horse rest at Essonne, then drove on till they picked up the Nemours diligence, and dismissed his coachman.

He reached home by about five in the morning, and went to bed amid the wreck of all his former notions of physiology, of nature, and of metaphysics; and he slept till nine, he was so tired by his expedition.

On waking, the doctor, quite sure that no one had crossed the threshold since his return, proceeded to verify the facts, not without an invincible dread. He himself had forgotten the difference between the two bank notes, and the displacement of the two volumes of the Pandects. The somnambulist had seen rightly. He rang for La Bougival.

'Tell Ursule to come to speak to me,' said he, sitting down in the middle of the library.

The girl came at once, flew to his side, and kissed him; the doctor took her on his knee, where, as she sat, her fine fair tresses mingled with her old friend's white hair.

'You have something to say to me, godfather?'

'Yes. But promise me, on your soul, to reply frankly, unequivocally, to my questions.'

Ursule blushed to the roots of her hair.

'Oh! I will ask you nothing that you cannot answer,' he went on, seeing the bashfulness of first love clouding the hitherto childlike clearness of her lovely eyes.

'Speak, godfather.'

'With what thought did you end your evening prayers last night; and at what hour did you say them?'

'It was a quarter-past nine, or half-past.'

'Well, repeat now your last prayer.'

The young girl hoped that her voice might communicate her faith to the unbeliever; she rose, knelt down, and clasped her hands fervently; a radiant look beamed in her face, she glanced at the old man, and said—

'What I asked of God last night I prayed for again this morning, and shall still ask till He grants it me.'

Then she repeated the prayer with fresh and emphatic expression; but, to her great surprise, her godfather interrupted her, ending it himself.

'Well, Ursule,' said the doctor, drawing her on to his knees again, 'and as you went to sleep with your head on the pillow, did you not say, "Dear godfather! Whom will he play backgammon with in Paris?"'

Ursule started to her feet as though the trump of Judgment had sounded in her ears; she gave a cry of terror; her dilated eyes stared at the old man with fixed horror.

'Who are you, godfather? Where did you get such a power?' she asked, fancying that as he did not believe in God, he must have made a compact with the angel of hell.

'What did you sow in the garden yesterday?'

'Mignonette, sweet peas, balsams——'

'And larkspurs to end with?'

She fell on her knees.

'Do not terrify me, godfather!—But you were here, were you not?'

'Am I not always with you?' replied the doctor in jest, to spare the innocent child's reason.

'Let us go to your room.' Then he gave her his arm and went upstairs.

'Your knees are quaking, dear friend,' said she.

'Yes; I feel quite overset.'

'Do you at last believe in God?' she exclaimed, with innocent gladness, though the tears rose to her eyes.

The old man looked round the neat and simple room he had arranged for Ursule. On the floor was an inexpensive green drugget, which she kept exquisitely clean; on the walls a paper with a pale-grey ground and a pattern of roses with their green leaves; there were white cotton curtains, with a pink border, to the windows looking on the courtyard; between the windows, below a tall mirror, a console of gilt wood with a marble slab, on which stood a blue Sèvres vase for flowers; and opposite the fireplace, a pretty inlaid chest of drawers with a top of fine marble. The bed, furnished with old chintz, and chintz curtains lined with pink, was one of the old *duchesse* four-

post beds which were common in the eighteenth century, ornamented with a capital of carved feathers to each of the fluted columns at the corners. On the chimney-shelf was an old clock, mounted in a sort of catafalque of tortoiseshell inlaid with ivory; the marble chimney-piece and candelabra, the glass, and the pier, painted in shades of grey, had a remarkably good effect of tone, colour, and style. A large wardrobe, the doors inlaid with landscapes in various kinds of wood, some of them of greenish tint, hardly to be met with in these days, no doubt contained her linen and her dresses.

The atmosphere of this room had a fragrance as of heaven. The careful arrangement of everything indicated a spirit of order, a feeling for the harmony of things, that would have struck any one, even a Minoret-Levrault. It was, above all, easy to see how dear to Ursule were the things about her, and how fond she was of the room which was, so to speak, part of all her life as a child and a young girl.

While looking round at it all as an excuse, the guardian convinced himself that from her window Ursule could see across to Madame de Portenduère's house. During the night he had considered the line of conduct to be taken with regard to the secret he had discovered of her budding passion. To question his ward would compromise him in her eyes; for either he must approve or disapprove of her love; in either case he would be awkwardly situated. He had therefore determined that he would study for himself the relations of young Portenduère and Ursule, to decide whether he should try to counteract her inclination before it had become irresistible. Only an old man could show so much prudence. Still gasping under the shock of finding the magnetic revelations true, he turned about, examining the smallest things in the room, for he wished to glance at the almanac which hung by a corner of the chimney-piece.

'These clumsy candlesticks are too heavy for your

pretty little hands,' he said, taking up the marble candlesticks, ornamented with brass.

He weighed them in his hands, looked at the almanac, unhooked it, and said—

'This, too, seems to me very ugly. Why do you hang this common calendar in such a pretty room?'

'Oh, leave me that, godfather!'

'No, no; you shall have another to-morrow.'

He went downstairs again, carrying away the convicting document, shut himself into his room, looked for Saint Savinien, and found, as the clairvoyante had said, a small red dot at the 19th of October; he found such another at Saint Denis' day, his own patron Saint; and at Saint John's day—that of the curé. And this dot, as large as a pin's head, the sleeping woman had discerned in spite of distance and obstacles. The old man meditated till dusk on all these facts, more stupendous to him than to any other man. He was forced to yield to evidence. A thick wall, within himself, as it were, crumbled down; for he had lived on the double foundation of his indifference to religion and his denial of magnetism. By proving that the senses—a purely physical structure, mere organs whose effects can all be explained—were conterminous with some of the attributes of infinity, magnetism overthrew, or at any rate seemed to him to overthrow, Spinoza's powerful logic: The Finite and the Infinite, two elements which, according to that great man, are incompatible, existed one in the other. However great the power he could conceive of the divisibility and mobility of matter, he could not credit it with almost divine characters. And he was too old to connect these phenomena with a system, to compare them with those of sleep, of vision, or of light. All his scientific theory, based on the statements of the school of Locke and Condillac, lay in ruins. On seeing his hollow idols wrecked, his incredulity naturally was shaken. Hence all the advantages in this struggle between Catholic youth

and Voltairean old age was certain to be on Ursule's side. A beam of light fell on the dismantled fortress in ruins; from the depths of the wreckage rose the cry of prayer.

And yet, the stiff-necked old man tried to dispute his own doubts. Though stricken to the heart, he could not make up his mind; he still strove with God. At the same time his mind seemed to vacillate; he was not the same man. He became unnaturally pensive; he read the *Pensées* of Pascal, Bossuet's sublime *Histoire des Variations*; he studied Bonald; he read Saint Augustine; he also read through the works of Swedenborg and of the deceased Saint-Martin, of whom the mysterious stranger had spoken. The structure raised in this man by materialism was splitting on all sides; a shock alone was needed; and when his heart was ripe for God, it fell into the heavenly vineyard as fruits drop. Several times already in the evening, when playing his game with the priest, his goddaughter sitting by, he had asked questions which, in view of his opinions, struck the Abbé Chaperon as strange; for as yet he knew not of the moral travail by which God was rectifying this noble conscience.

'Do you believe in apparitions?' the infidel suddenly asked his pastor, pausing in his game.

'Cardan, a great philosopher of the sixteenth century, said that he had seen some,' replied the curé.

'I know of all those that the philosophers have seen; I have just re-read Plotinus. At this moment I ask you as a Catholic: I want to know whether you think that a dead man can return to visit the living.'

'Well, Jesus appeared to His apostles after His death,' replied the priest. 'The Church must believe in the apparitions of our Lord. As to miracles, there is no lack of them,' added the Abbé Chaperon with a smile. 'Would you like to hear of the latest? Some were wrought in the eighteenth century.'

'Pooh!'

'Yes; the blessed Maria-Alphonzo de Liguori knew of

the Pope's death when he was far from Rome, at the moment when the holy Father expired, and there were many witnesses to the miracle. The reverend bishop, in a trance, heard the Pontiff's last words, and repeated them to several persons. The messenger bringing the news did not arrive till thirty hours later——'

'Jesuit!' said Minoret with a smile; 'I do not ask you for proofs; I ask you whether you believe it.'

'I believe that the apparition depends greatly on the person seeing it,' said the curé, still laughing at the sceptic.

'My dear friend, I am not laying a trap for you. What is your belief on this point?'

'I believe that the power of God is infinite,' replied the Abbé.

'When I die, if I am at peace with God, I will entreat Him to let me appear to you,' said the doctor, laughing.

'That is precisely the agreement made by Cardan with his friend,' replied the curé.

'Ursule,' said Minoret, 'if ever a danger should threaten you, call me—I would come.'

'You have just put into simple words the touching elegy called *Néère*, by André Chénier,' replied the curé. 'But poets are great only because they know how to embody facts or feelings in perennially living forms.'

'Why do you talk of dying, my dear godfather?' said the young girl sadly. 'We shall not die, we who are Christians; the grave is but the cradle of the soul.'

'Well, well,' said the doctor with a smile, 'we are bound to quit this world; and when I am no more, you will be very much astonished at your fortune.'

'When you are no more, my kind friend, my only consolation will be to devote my life to you.'

'To me—when I am dead?'

'Yes. All the good works I may be able to do shall be done in your name to redeem your errors. I will pray to God day by day to persuade His infinite mercy not to punish eternally the faults of a day, but to give a place

near to Himself among the spirits of the blest to a soul so noble and so pure as yours.'

This reply, spoken with angelic candour and in a tone of absolute conviction, confounded error, and converted Denis Minoret like another Saint Paul. A flash of internal light stunned him, and at the same time this tenderness, extending even to the life to come, brought tears to his eyes. This sudden effect of grace was almost electrical. The curé clasped his hands and stood up in his agitation. The child herself, surprised at her success, shed tears. The old man drew himself up as though some one had called him, looked into space as if he saw an aurora; then he knelt on his armchair, folded his hands, and cast down his eyes in deep humiliation.

'Great God!' he said, in a broken voice, and looking up to heaven, 'if any one can obtain my forgiveness, and lead me to Thee, is it not this spotless creature? Pardon my repentant old age, presented to Thee by this glorious child!'

He lifted up his soul in silence to God, beseeching Him to enlighten him by knowledge after having overwhelmed him by grace; then, turning to the curé, he held out his hand, saying—

'My dear father in God, I am a little child again. I am yours; I give my soul into your hands.'

Ursule kissed her godfather's hands, covering them with tears of joy. The old man took her on his knee, gaily calling her his godmother. The curé, much moved, recited the *Veni Creator* in a sort of religious transport. This hymn was their evening prayer as the three Christians knelt together.

'What has happened?' asked La Bougival in astonishment.

'At last my godfather believes in God!' cried Ursule.

'And a good thing too; that was all that was wanting to make him perfect!' exclaimed the old peasant woman, crossing herself with simple gravity.

'My dear Doctor,' said the good priest, 'you will soon have mastered the grandeur of religion and the necessity for its exercises; and you will find its philosophy, in so far as it is human, much loftier than that of the most daring minds.'

The curé, who displayed an almost childlike joy, then agreed to instruct the old man by meeting him as a catechumen twice a week.

Thus the conversion ascribed to Ursule and to a spirit of sordid self-interest had been spontaneous. The priest, who for fourteen years had restrained himself from touching the wounds in that heart, though he had deeply deplored them, had been appealed to, as we go to a surgeon when we feel an injury. Since that scene every evening Ursule's prayers had become family prayers. Every moment the old man had felt peace growing upon him in the place of agitation. And viewing God as the responsible editor of inexplicable facts—as he put it—his mind was quite easy. His darling child told him that by this it could be seen that he was making progress in the kingdom of God.

To-day, during the service, he had just read the prayers with the exercise of his understanding; for, in his first talk with the curé, he had risen to the divine idea of the communion of the faithful. The venerable neophyte had understood the eternal symbol connected with that nourishment, which faith makes necessary as soon as the whole, deep, glorious meaning of the symbol is thoroughly felt. If he had seemed in a hurry to get home, it was to thank his dear little goddaughter for having brought him to the Lord, to use the fine old-fashioned phrase. And so he had her on his knee in his drawing-room, and was kissing her solemnly on the brow, at the very moment when his heirs, defiling her holy influence by their ignoble alarms, were lavishing on Ursule the coarsest abuse. The good man's haste to be at home, his scorn, as they thought it, for his relations,

his sharp replies as he left the church, were all naturally attributed by each of the family to the hatred for them which Ursule had implanted in him.

While the girl was playing to her godfather the variations on *La dernière Pensée musicale* of Weber, a plot was being hatched in Minoret-Levrault's dining-room, which was destined to bring on to the stage one of the most important actors in this drama. The breakfast, which lasted two hours, was as noisy as a provincial breakfast always is, and washed down by capital wine brought to Nemours by canal, either from Burgundy or from Touraine. Zélie had procured some shell-fish too, some sea-fish, and a few rarer dainties to do honour to Désiré's return.

The dining-room, in its midst the round table of tempting aspect, looked like an inn-room. Zélie, satisfied with the extent of her household offices, had built a large room between the vast courtyard and the kitchen-garden, which was full of vegetables and fruit-trees. Here everything was merely neat and substantial. The example set by Levrault-Levrault had been a terror to the country-side, and Zélie had forbidden the master-builder's dragging her into any such folly. The room was hung with satin paper, and furnished with plain walnut-wood chairs and sideboards, with an earthenware stove, a clock on the wall, and a barometer. Though the crockery was ordinary—plain white china—the table shone with linen and abundant plate.

As soon as the coffee had been served by Zélie, who hopped to and fro like a grain of shot in a bottle of champagne, for she kept but one cook; and when Désiré, the budding lawyer, had been fully apprised of the great event of the morning and its results, Zélie shut the door, and the notary Dionis was called upon to speak. The silence that fell, the looks fixed by each expectant heir on that authoritative face, plainly showed

how great is the influence exercised by these men over whole families.

'My dear children,' he began, 'your uncle, having been born in 1746, is at this day eighty-three years old; now old men are liable to fits of folly, and this little——'

'Viper!' exclaimed Madame Massin.

'Wretch!' said Zélie.

'We will only call her by her name,' said Dionis.

'Well, then, a thief,' said Madame Crémière.

'A very pretty thief!' added Désiré Minoret.

'This little Ursule,' Dionis went on, 'is very dear to him. I have not waited till this morning to make inquiries in the interest of you all as my clients, and this is what I have learned concerning this young——'

'Spoiler!' put in the tax collector.

'Underhand fortune-hunter,' said the lawyer's clerk.

'Hush, my friends, or I shall put on my hat and go, and good day to you.'

'Come, come, old man!' said Minoret, pouring him out a liqueur glassful of rum. 'Drink that; it comes from Rome, direct.'

'Ursule is no doubt Joseph Mirouët's legitimate offspring. But her father was the natural son of Valentin Mirouët, your uncle's father-in-law. Thus Ursule is the natural niece of Doctor Denis Minoret. As his natural niece, any will the doctor may make in her favour may perhaps be void, and if he should leave her his fortune, you may bring a lawsuit against her; this might be bad enough for you, for it is impossible to say that there is no tie of relationship between the doctor and Ursule; still, a lawsuit would certainly frighten a defenceless girl, and would result in a compromise.'

'The law is so rigorous as to the rights of natural children,' said the newly-hatched lawyer, eager to display his learning, 'that by the terms of a judgment of the Court of Appeal of July 7, 1817, a natural child

can claim nothing from its natural grandfather, not even maintenance. So, you see, that the parentage of a natural child carries back. The law is against a natural child, even in his legitimate descendants; for it regards any legacies benefiting the grandchildren as bestowed through the personal intermediary of the natural son, their parent. This is the inference from a comparison of Articles 757, 908, and 911 of the Civil Code. And, in fact, the Royal Court of Paris, on the 26th of December, only last year, reduced a legacy bequeathed to the legitimate child of a natural son by its grandfather, who, as its grandfather, was as much a stranger in blood to his natural grandson as the doctor is to Ursule as her uncle.'

'All that,' said Goupil, 'seems to me to relate only to the question of bequests made by grandparents to their illegitimate descendants; it has nothing to do with uncles, who do not appear to me to have any blood relationships to the legitimate offspring of these natural half-brothers. Ursule is a stranger in blood to Doctor Minoret. I remember a judgment delivered at the Supreme Court at Colmar in 1825, when I was finishing my studies, by which it was pronounced that the illegitimate child being dead, his descendants could no longer be liable to his interposition. Now Ursule's father is dead.'

Goupil's argument produced, what in reports of law-cases journalists are accustomed to designate by this parenthesis: (*Great sensation*).

'What does that matter?' cried Dionis. 'Even if the case of a legacy left by the uncle of an illegitimate child has never yet come before the courts, if it should occur, the rigour of the French law towards natural children will be all the more surely applied, because we live in times when religion is respected. And I will answer for it that, in such a suit, a compromise would be offered; especially if it were known that you were

resolved to carry the case against Ursule even to the Court of Final Appeal.'

The delight of heirs who might find piles of gold betrayed itself in smiles, little jumps, and gestures all round the table. No one observed Goupil's shake of dissent. But, then, this exultation was immediately followed by deep silence and dismay at the notary's next word—

'But——'

Dionis at once saw every eye fixed on him, every face assuming the same angle, just as if he had pulled the wire of one of those toy theatres where all the figures move in jerks by the action of wheel-work.

'But there is no law to hinder your uncle from adopting or marrying Ursule,' he went on. 'As to an adoption, it might be disputed, and you would, I believe, win the case; the High Courts are not to be trifled with in the matter of adoption, and you would be examined in the preliminary inquiry. It is all very well for the doctor to display the ribbon of St. Michael, to be an officer of the Legion of Honour, and formerly physician to the ex-emperor; he would go to the wall. But though you might be warned in case of an adoption, how are you to know if he marries her? The old fellow is quite sharp enough to get married in Paris after residing there for a year, and to secure to his bride a settlement of a million francs under the marriage contract. The only thing, therefore, which really jeopardises your inheritance is that your uncle should marry the child.' Here the notary paused.

'There is another risk,' said Goupil, with a knowing air. 'He may make a will in favour of a third person, old Bongrand for instance, who would be constituted trustee for Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët.'

'If you worry your uncle,' Dionis began again, cutting short his head clerk, 'if you are not all as nice as possible to Ursule, you will drive him either into a marriage or

into the trusteeship of which Goupil speaks; but I do not think he is likely to have recourse to a trust; it is a dangerous alternative. As to his marrying her, it is easy to prevent it. Désiré has only to show the girl a little attention; she will certainly prefer a charming young fellow, the cock of the walk at Nemours, to an old man.'

'Mother,' said the postmaster's son in Zélie's ear, tempted both by the money and by Ursule's beauty, 'if I were to marry her we should get it all.'

'Are you mad? You who will have fifty thousand francs a year one of those days, and who are sure to be elected deputy! So long as I live you shall never hang a millstone round your neck by a foolish marriage. Seven hundred thousand francs? Thank you for nothing! Why, Monsieur, the Mayor's only daughter will have fifty thousand a year, and they have already made overtures.'

This reply, in which, for the first time in his life, his mother spoke roughly to him, extinguished in Désiré every hope of marrying the fair Ursule, for his father and he could never gain the day against the determination written in Zélie's terrible blue eyes.

'Yes; but, I say, Monsieur Dionis,' cried Crémière, whose wife had nudged his elbow, 'if the old man took the matter seriously, and let his ward marry Désiré, settling on her the absolute possession of his property, goodbye to our chances! And if he lives another five years, our uncle will have at least a million.'

'Never,' cried Zélie; 'never so long as I live and breathe shall Désiré marry the daughter of a bastard, a girl taken in out of charity, picked up in the streets! What next, by Heaven? At his uncle's death my son will be the representative of the Minorets; and the Minorets can show five centuries of good citizenship. It is as good as a noble pedigree. Make your minds easy. Désiré shall marry when we see what he is likely to do in the Chamber of Deputies.'

This arrogant pronouncement was seconded by Goupil, who added—

'With eighty thousand francs a year, Désiré may rise to be president of a Supreme Court, or public prosecutor, which leads to a peerage. A foolish marriage would be the ruin of his prospects.'

The heirs all began to talk at once, but they were silenced by the blow of his fist that Minoret struck on the table to enable the notary to speak on.

'Your uncle is an excellent and worthy man,' said Dionis. 'He believes himself immortal; and, like all clever men, he will allow death to overtake him before he has made his will. My opinion, therefore, for the moment, is that he should be induced to invest his capital in such a way as to make it difficult to dispossess you; and the opportunity now offers. Young Portenduère is in Sainte Pélagie, locked up for a hundred and odd thousand francs of debts. His old mother knows he is in prison; she is weeping like a Magdalen, and has asked the Abbé Chaperon to dinner, to talk over the catastrophe, no doubt. Well, I shall go this evening and suggest to your uncle to sell his stock of consolidated five per cents., which are at a hundred and eighteen, and lend the sum necessary to release the prodigal to Madame de Portenduère on the farm at Bordières and her dwelling-house. I am in my rights as a notary in applying to him on behalf of that little idiot of a Portenduère, and it is quite natural that I should wish him to change his investments; I get the commission, the stamps, and the business. If I can get him to take my advice, I shall propose to him to invest the rest of his capital in real estate. I have some splendid lands for sale in my office. When once his fortune is invested in real estate, or in mortgages on land in this neighbourhood, it will not easily fly away. It is always easy to raise difficulties in the way of realising the capital if he should wish to do so.'

The heirs, struck by the soundness of this logic, much

more skilful than that of M. Josse, expressed themselves by approving murmurs.

'So settle it among yourselves,' added the notary, in conclusion, 'to keep your uncle in this town, where he has his own ways, and where you can keep an eye on him. If you can find a lover for the girl, you will hinder her marrying.'

'But if she were to marry him?' said Goupil, urged by an ambitious instinct.

'That would not be so bad after all; your loss would be set down in plain figures, and you would know what the old man would give her,' answered the notary. 'Still, if you set Désiré at her, he might easily play fast and loose with her till the old man's death. Marriages are arranged and upset again.'

'The shortest way,' said Goupil, 'if the doctor is likely to live a long time yet, would be to get her married to some good fellow, who would take her out of the way by settling with her at Sens, or Montargis, or Orleans, with a hundred thousand francs down.'

Dionis, Massin, Zélie, and Goupil, the only clear heads of the party, exchanged glances full of meaning.

'He would be a maggot in the pear,' said Zélie in Massin's ear.

'Why was he allowed to come?' replied the registrar.

'That would just suit you!' exclaimed Désiré to Goupil; 'but how could you ever keep yourself decent enough to please the old man and his ward?'

'You don't think small beer of yourself!' said Minoret, understanding Goupil at last.

This coarse jest was greeted with shouts of laughter. But the lawyer's clerk glared at the laughers with such a sweeping and terrible gaze that silence was immediately restored.

'In these days,' Zélie whispered to Massin, 'notaries think only of their own interests. What if Dionis, to get his commission, should take Ursule's side?'

'I know he is safe,' replied the registrar, with a keen twinkle in his wicked little eyes; he was about to add, 'I have him in my power,' but he abstained.

'I am entirely of Dionis' opinion,' he said aloud.

'And so am I,' exclaimed Zélie, though she already suspected the notary and Massin to be in collusion for their own advantage.

'My wife has given our vote,' said the postmaster, sipping a glass of spirits, though his face was already purple with digesting the meal and from a considerable consumption of wine and liqueurs.

'It is quite right,' said the tax-collector.

'Then I will call on him after dinner?' asked Dionis.

'If Monsieur Dionis is right,' said Madame Crémière to Madame Massin, 'we ought to go to see your uncle, as we used, every Sunday evening, and do all Monsieur Dionis has just told us.'

'Yes, indeed! To be received as we have been,' exclaimed Zélie. 'After all, we have an income of over forty thousand francs; and he has refused all our invitations. We are as good as he is. I can steer my own ship, thank you, though I cannot write prescriptions!'

'As I am far from having forty thousand francs a year,' said Madame Massin, nettled, 'I am not anxious to lose ten thousand!'

'We are his nieces; we will look after him; we shall see what is going on,' said Madame Crémière. 'And some day, Cousin Zélie, you will be beholden to us.'

'Be civil to Ursule; old Jordy left her his savings,' said the notary, putting his right forefinger to his lip.

'I will mind my P's and Q's,' said Désiré.

'You were a match for Desroches, the sharpest attorney in Paris,' said Goupil to his master, as they quitted the house.

'And they dispute our bills,' remarked the notary, with a bitter smile.

The heirs, seeing out Dionis and his head clerk,

found themselves at the gate, all with faces heated from the meal, just as the congregation came out from vespers. As the notary had foretold, the Abbé Chaperon had given his arm to old Madame de Portenduère.

'She has dragged him to vespers!' cried Madame Massin, pointing out to Madame Crémière Ursule coming out of the church with her uncle.

'Let us go and speak to him,' suggested Madame Crémière, going forward.

The change which the conclave had produced in all their countenances astonished Doctor Minoret. He wondered what the cause could be of this friendliness to order, and out of curiosity he favoured a meeting between Ursule and these two women, who were eager to address her with exaggerated sweetness and forced smiles.

'Uncle, will you allow us to call on you this evening?' said Madame Crémière. 'We sometimes think we are in the way; but it is long now since our children have paid their respects to you, and our daughters are of an age to make friends with dear Ursule.'

'Ursule justifies her name,' said the Doctor; 'she is not at all tame.'

'Let us tame her,' said Madame Massin. 'And besides, my dear uncle,' added the prudent housewife, trying to conceal her scheming under a semblance of economy, 'we have been told that your charming goddaughter has such a talent for the piano, that we should be enchanted to hear her play. Madame Crémière and I are rather inclined to have her master to teach our girls; for if he had seven or eight pupils he might fix a price for his lessons within our means——'

'By all means,' said the old man; 'all the more, indeed, because I am thinking of getting a singing-master for Ursule.'

'Very well; then this evening, uncle; and we will bring your grand-nephew Désiré, who is now a full-fledged attorney.'

'Till this evening,' replied Minoret, who wished to study these mean souls.

His two nieces shook hands with Ursule, saying with affected graciousness, 'Till this evening.'

'Oh, dear godfather, you can read my heart, I believe!' cried Ursule, with a grateful look at the old man.

'You have a good voice,' he said. 'And I also mean to give you drawing and Italian lessons. A woman,' he added, looking at Ursule as he opened the gate of his own courtyard, 'ought to be educated in such a way as to be equal to any position in which she may be placed by marriage.'

Ursule blushed as red as a cherry; her guardian seemed to be thinking of the very person she herself was thinking of. Feeling herself on the point of confessing to the doctor the involuntary impulse which made her think of Savinien, and refer all her strivings after perfection to him, she went to sit under the bower of creepers, against which she looked from a distance like a white and blue flower.

'Now you see, godfather, your nieces were kind to me; they were very nice just now,' said she, as he followed her, to mislead him as to the thoughts which had made her pensive.

'Poor little thing!' said the old man. He laid Ursule's hand on his arm, patting it gently, and led her along the terrace by the river, where no one could overhear them.

'Why do you say, "Poor little thing"?'

'Can you not see that they are afraid of you?'

'But why?'

'My heirs are at this moment very uneasy about my conversion; they ascribe it, no doubt, to your influence, and fancy that I shall deprive them of their inheritance to make you the richer.'

'But you will not?' said Ursule with simplicity, and looking in his face.

'Ah, divine comfort of my old age,' said the old man, lifting her up, and kissing her on both cheeks. 'It was for her sake and not for my own, O God, that I besought Thee just now to suffer me to live till I shall have given her into the keeping of some good man worthy of her!—You will see, my angel, the farce that the Minorets and the Crémières and the Massins are going to play here. You want to prolong and beautify my life. They! they think of nothing but my death!'

'God forbids us to hate; but if that is true—oh, I scorn them!' cried Ursule.

'Dinner!' cried La Bougival, from the top of the steps which, on the garden side, were at the end of the gallery.

Ursule and the doctor were eating their dessert in the pretty dining-room painted to imitate Chinese lacquer, which had ruined Levrault-Levrault, when the Justice walked in. The doctor, as his most signal mark of intimacy, offered him a cup of his own coffee, a mixture of Mocha with Bourbon and Martinique berries, roasted, ground, and made by his own hands in a silver coffee-pot of the kind patented by Chaptal.

'Well, well,' said Bongrand, putting up his spectacles, and looking at the old man with a sly twinkle, 'the town is by the ears! Your appearance at church has revolutionised your relations. You are going to leave everything to the priests and to the poor! You have stirred them up, and they are astir! Oh! I saw their first commotion on the Church Square; they were as fussy as a nest of ants robbed of their eggs.'

'What did I tell you, Ursule?' exclaimed the old man. 'Even at the risk of grieving you, my child, am I not bound to teach you to know the world, and to put you on your guard against undeserved enmity.'

'I wanted to say a few words to you on that subject,' said Bongrand, seizing the opportunity of speaking to his old friend about Ursule's future prospects.

The doctor put a black velvet cap on his white head, and the Justice kept on his hat as a protection against the dew, and they walked together up and down the terrace, talking over the means of securing to Ursule the little fortune the doctor proposed to leave her. Bongrand knew the opinion of Dionis as to the invalidity of any will made by the doctor in Ursule's favour, for Nemours was too inquisitive as to the Minoret inheritance for this question not to have been discussed by the wise-heads of the town. He himself had decided that Ursule was an alien in blood as regarded Doctor Minoret; but he was fully aware that the spirit of the law was adverse to the recognition of illegitimate offspring as members of the family. The framers of the Code had only anticipated the weakness of fathers and mothers for their natural children; it had not been supposed that uncles or aunts might have such tender feelings for an illegitimate relation as to favour his descendants. There was evidently an omission in the law.

'In any other country,' said he to the doctor, after setting forth the state of the law which Goupil, Dionis, and Désiré had just explained to the heirs, 'Ursule would have nothing to fear. She is a legitimate child, and her father's disabilities ought only to affect the money left by Valentin Mirouët, your father-in-law. But in France the bench is unluckily very clever and very logical; it insists on the spirit of the law. Pleaders will talk of morality, and prove that the omission in the Code arises from the single-mindedness of the framers, who never foresaw such a case, but who nevertheless established a principle. A lawsuit would be lengthy and costly. With Zélie on the other side it would be carried to the Court of Appeal; and I cannot be sure that I should be still living when the case was tried.'

'The strongest case is not certain to stand,' cried the doctor. 'I can see the documents on the subject already: "To what degree of relationship ought the disabilities of

natural children in the matter of inheritance to extend ?" and the glory of a clever lawyer is to gain a rotten suit.'

'On my honour,' said Bongrand, 'I would not take it upon myself to assert that the judges would not widen the interpretation of the law so as to extend its protection of marriage, which is the everlasting foundation of society.'

Without explaining his intentions, the doctor rejected the idea of a trust. But as to the notion of marrying her, which Bongrand suggested as a means of securing her his fortune—

'Poor little thing!' cried the doctor. 'I may live fifteen years yet. What would become of her?'

'Well, then, what do you propose?' said Bongrand.

'We must think about it.—I shall see,' replied the old doctor, evidently at a loss for an answer.

At this instant Ursule came to tell the friends that Dionis wished to see the doctor.

'Dionis already!' exclaimed Minoret, looking at the Justice. 'Yes,' he said to Ursule; 'let him be shown in.'

'I will bet my spectacles to a brimstone match that he is your heirs' stalking-horse. They breakfasted together at the posting-house, and something has been plotted there.'

The notary, following Ursule, came out into the garden. After the usual civilities and a few commonplace remarks, Dionis begged for a moment's private conversation. Ursule and Bongrand went into the drawing-room.

'We must think about it!—I shall see!' said Bongrand to himself, echoing the doctor's last words. 'That is what clever people think; then death overtakes them, and they leave those who are dearest to them in the greatest difficulties!'

The distrust a man of business feels of a man of talent is extraordinary. He cannot admit that the greater includes the less. But this very distrust, perhaps, implies praise. Seeing these superior minds inhabiting the high peaks of human thought, men of business do not believe

them capable of descending to the infinitely small details which, like interest in the world of finance, or microscopic creatures in natural history, at last accumulate till they equal the capital, or constitute a world. It is a mistake. The man of feeling and the man of genius see everything.

Bongrand, nettled by the doctor's persistent silence, but urged, no doubt, by Ursule's interests, which he feared were compromised, determined to protect her against her rivals. He was in despair at not knowing what was going on between the old man and Dionis.

'However pure-minded Ursule may be,' thought he, as he looked at her, 'there is one point on which young girls are wont to have their own ideas of jurisprudence and morality. Let us try!'—'The Minoret-Levraults,' said he to Ursule, as he settled his spectacles, 'are quite capable of proposing that you should marry their son.'

The poor child turned pale. She had been too well brought up, and had too much perfect delicacy, to go and listen to what her uncle and Dionis were saying; but after a short deliberation she thought she might go into the room, thinking that if she were in the way her godfather would make her understand it. The Chinese summer-house, which was the doctor's private study, had the shutters of the glass door left open. Ursule's idea was that she would go herself to close them. She apologised for leaving the lawyer alone in the drawing-room; but he smiled and said—

'Do so, do so.'

Ursule went to the steps leading from the Chinese summer-house down to the garden, and there she stood for some minutes slowly closing the Venetian shutters and looking at the sunset. Then she heard this answer spoken by the doctor as he came towards the summer-house—

'My heirs would be delighted to see me possessed of real estate and mortgages. They fancy that my fortune

would be much more safely invested. I can guess all they could say; and you, perhaps, are their representative. But, my dear sir, my arrangements are unalterable. My heirs will have the capital of the fortune I brought here with me; they may accept that as a certainty, and leave me in peace. If either of them should make any change in what I believe it to be my duty to do for that child' (and he pointed to his goddaughter), 'I will come back from the other world to torment him!—So Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère may remain in prison if his release depends on me,' added the doctor. 'I shall not sell any of my securities.'

As she heard the last words of this speech, Ursule felt the first, the only grief she had ever known. She rested her forehead against the shutter, and clung to it for support.

'Good heavens! what ails her?' cried the old doctor; 'she is colourless. Such emotion just after dinner might kill her!'

He put out his arm to hold Ursule, who fell almost fainting.

'Good evening, monsieur; leave me,' he said to the notary.

He carried his goddaughter to a huge easy-chair, dating from Louis xv., which stood in his study, seized a phial of ether from his medicine store, and made her inhale it.

'Go and take my place, my friend,' said he to Bongrand, who was alarmed; 'I must stay with her.'

The Justice walked to the gate with the notary, asking him, but without any show of eagerness, 'What has come over Ursule?'

'I do not know,' said Monsieur Dionis. 'She was standing on the steps listening to us; and when her uncle refused to lend the necessary sum to release young Portenduère, who is in prison for debt—for he had not a Monsieur Bongrand to defend him as Monsieur du

Rouvre had—she turned pale and tottered. Does she love him? Can there be——?'

'At fifteen!' said Bongrand, interrupting Dionis.

'She was born in February 1814. In four months she will be sixteen.'

'But she has never seen her neighbour,' replied the Justice. 'No, it is just an attack.'

'An attack of the heart,' said the notary.

Dionis was much delighted by his discovery; it would avert the dreaded marriage by which the doctor might have frustrated the hopes of his heirs, while Bongrand saw his castles in the air in ruins; he had long dreamed of a marriage between his own son and Ursule.

'If the poor child should be in love with that youth, it would be unfortunate for her. Madame de Portenduère is a Bretonne, and crazy about noble birth,' replied the Justice, after a pause.

'Happily—for the honour of the Portenduères,' said the notary, who had nearly betrayed himself.

To do the worthy and honourable lawyer full justice, it must be said that, on his way from the gate to the drawing-room, he gave up, not without regret for his son's loss, the hope he had cherished of one day calling Ursule his daughter. He intended to give his son six thousand francs a year as soon as he was appointed deputy recorder; and if the doctor would have settled a hundred thousand francs on Ursule, the young couple should have been patterns of a happy household. His Eugène was a loyal and accomplished young fellow. Perhaps he had a little over-praised Eugène, and perhaps old Minoret's suspicions had been aroused by that.

'I will fall back on the mayor's daughter,' thought Bongrand. 'But Ursule without a penny would be better than Mademoiselle Levrault-Crémière with her million. Now we must see what can be done to get Ursule married to this young Portenduère, if, in fact, she loves him.'



After closing the doors on the side next the library and the garden, the doctor led the girl to the window that looked over the river.

'What ails you, cruel child?' he said. 'Your life is my life. Without your smile what would become of me?'

'Savinien—in prison!' answered she, and with these words a torrent of tears burst from her eyes, and she began to sob.

'Now all will be well,' said the old man to himself, as he stood feeling her pulse with a father's anxiety. 'Alas! she has all my poor wife's nervous sensibility!' he thought; and he fetched a stethoscope, which he placed over Ursule's heart and listened. 'Well, there is nothing wrong there,' he said to himself. 'I did not know, my sweetheart, that you loved him so much already,' he went on, as he looked at her. 'But think to me as if to yourself, and tell me all that has occurred between you.'

'I do not love him, godfather; we have never spoken to each other,' she sobbed out; 'but to know that the poor young man is in prison, and to hear that you, who are so kind, refuse sternly to help him out——'

'Ursule, my sweet little angel, if you do not love him, why have you put a red dot to the day of Saint Savinien as you have to that of Saint Denis? Come, tell me all the smallest incidents of this love affair.'

Ursule coloured, and swallowed down a few tears; for a minute there was silence between them.

'Are you afraid of your father, of your friend, your mother, your physician, your godfather, whose heart has within these few days become even more soft and loving than it was?'

'Well, then, dear godfather,' said she, 'I will open my soul to you. In the month of May Monsieur Savinien came to see his mother. Till that visit I had never paid the least attention to him. When he went away to live in Paris I was a little child, and I saw no difference, I

swear to you, between a young man—and others like you, excepting that I loved you, and never imagined I could love any one better, whoever he might be. Monsieur Savinien arrived by the mail-coach the night before his mother's birthday without our knowing of it. At seven next morning, after saying my prayers, as I opened the window to air my room, I saw the open windows of Monsieur Savinien's room, and Monsieur Savinien himself in his dressing-gown engaged in shaving himself, and doing everything with such grace in his movments—in short, I thought him very nice. He combed his black moustache, and the little tuft on his chin, and I saw his throat white and round.—Oh! must I say it all?—I noticed that his fresh neck, and his face, and his beautiful black hair were quite unlike yours when I see you shaving yourself; and something rose up in me from I know not where—like a mist rushing in waves to my heart, to my throat, to my head, and so violently that I had to sit down. I could not stand; I was trembling. But I longed so much to see him that I pulled myself up on tiptoe; then he saw me, and for fun he blew me a kiss from the ends of his fingers, and——'

'And——?'

'And I hid myself,' she went on, 'equally ashamed and happy, without understanding why I was ashamed of my happiness. This feeling, which bewildered my soul while giving it an unexplained sense of power, came over me each time that I saw his young face again in fancy. Indeed, I liked to have that feeling, though it was so painfully agitating. As I went to mass an irresistible force made me look at Monsieur Savinien giving his arm to his mother, and his way of walking, and his clothes—everything about him, to the sound of his boots on the pavement, seemed so pretty. The least thing about him, his hand in its fine kid glove, had a sort of charm for me. And yet I was strong enough not to think of him during the service. As we came out I waited in the church to

let Madame de Portenduère go first, so as to walk behind him. I cannot tell you how much I was interested in all these little things. On coming in, as I turned round to shut the gate——'

'And La Bougival?' asked the doctor.

'Oh, I had let her go to the kitchen,' said Ursule innocently. 'So I could, of course, see Monsieur Savinien standing squarely to look at me. Oh, dear godfather, I felt so proud as I fancied I saw in his eyes a sort of surprise and admiration, and I do not know what I would not have done to give him cause to look at me. I felt as though henceforth I ought to think of nothing but of how to please him. His look is now the sweetest reward of all I can do right. From that moment I have thought of him incessantly and in spite of myself.—Monsieur Savinien went away that evening, and I have not seen him since; the Rue des Bourgeois has seemed quite empty, and he has taken my heart away with him, as it were, without knowing it.'

'And that is all?' asked the doctor.

'Yes, all, godfather,' she said with a sigh, in which regret at having no more to tell was lost in the grief of the moment.

'My dear child,' said the old man, drawing Ursule on to his knee, 'you will soon be sixteen years old, and your life as a woman will begin. You are now between your blissful childhood, which is coming to an end, and the agitations of love, which will make life stormy for you, for you have the highly strung nerves of an excessively sensitive nature. It is love, my child, that has come upon you,' said the old man, with a look of deep pathos, 'love in its holy simplicity, love as it ought to be, involuntary and swift, coming like a thief that takes all—yes, all! And I was prepared for it. I have studied women carefully, and I know that, though with most of them love does not wholly possess them till after many proofs, many miracles of affection, if such as these do

not speak nor yield till they are conquered, there are others who, under the sway of a sympathy which can now be accounted for by magnetic fluids, are vanquished in a moment. I can tell you now: as soon as I saw the lovely woman who bore your name, I felt that I should love her alone and faithfully without knowing whether in our characters or our persons we should prove suitable. Is there a second sight in love? How can the question be answered, when we see so many unions, which have been sanctioned by such a sacred contract, destroyed afterwards, and giving rise to almost eternal hatred and intense aversion? The senses may be in affinity while minds are discordant, and some persons perhaps live more by the mind than by the senses. On the other hand, characters are often suited in persons who cannot please each other.

'These two opposite phenomena, which would account for many catastrophes, demonstrate the wisdom of the law which leaves to parents supreme control over the marriage of their children; for a young girl is often the dupe of one of these two hallucinations. And, indeed, I do not blame you. The feelings you experience, the emotional impulse which rushes from its hitherto unknown focus to your heart and to your brain, the joy with which you think of Savinien, are all quite natural. But, my adored child, as our good Abbé Chaperon will have told you, society demands the sacrifice of many natural impulses. The destiny of men is one thing, the destiny of women another. It was in my power to choose Ursule Mirouët for my wife, to go to her and tell her how much I loved her, whereas a young girl is false to her virtue when she solicits the love of the man she loves; a woman is not, as we are, at liberty to follow up in broad daylight the fulfilment of her hopes. Thus, modesty is in women, and especially in you, the insurmountable barrier which guards the secrets of your heart. Your hesitation to confide even to me what

your first emotions had been, shows me plainly that you would suffer the worst torments rather than confess to Savinien——'

'Oh, yes!' she exclaimed.

'But, my child, you must do more. You must repress these impulses of your heart, you must forget them.'

'Why?'

'Because, my little darling, you must love no man but him who will be your husband; and even if Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère should love you——'

'I had not thought of such a thing.'

'Listen to me.—Even if he should love you, even if his mother were to ask me to give him your hand, I would not consent to the marriage till I had subjected Savinien to a long and mature course of proof. His recent conduct has placed him under a cloud in every good family, and raised such barriers between him and any young girl of fortune as it will be hard to break down.'

A heavenly smile checked Ursule's tears, as she said, 'Misfortune has its good uses!'

The doctor found nothing to say to her artlessness.

'What has he done, godfather?' she inquired.

'In two years, my darling, he has run into debt in Paris to the sum of a hundred and twenty thousand francs! He has been so clumsy as to let himself be taken and imprisoned at Sainte-Pélagie, a blunder which disgraces a young man for ever in these days. A spendthrift who can bring his mother to grief and penury would kill his wife with despair, as your poor father did.'

'Do you think he might amend his ways?' she asked.

'If his mother pays his debts, he will be left without a penny, and I know no harder punishment for a nobleman than to be penniless.'

This reply made Ursule thoughtful; she wiped away her tears, and said to her godfather—

'If you can save him, do so, godfather. Such a service

will give you the right to admonish him; you will remonstrate with him——'

'And then,' said the doctor, mimicking her tone, 'he may perhaps come here, and the old lady too, and we shall see them, and——'

'At this moment I am thinking only of him,' replied Ursule, colouring.

'Think of him no more, my poor child. It is madness,' said the doctor gravely. 'Never would Madame de Portenduère—a Kergarouët—if she had but three hundred francs a year to live on, consent to see the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, grand-nephew of the late Comte de Portenduère, lieutenant-general of the King's naval forces, and son of the Vicomte de Portenduère, ship's captain, married to — whom? Ursule Mirouët, the daughter of a regimental bandmaster, without a fortune; and whose father—now is the time to tell you—was the bastard son of an organist, my father-in-law.'

'Yes, godfather, you are right. We are equals only in the eyes of God. I will think of him no more—except in my prayers!' she exclaimed through the sobs with which she received this information. 'Give him all you intended to leave me. What can a poor girl like me want of money!—and he, in prison!'

'Lay all your distresses before God, and He perhaps will intervene to help us.'

For some minutes silence reigned. When Ursule, who dared not look at her godfather, presently raised her eyes to his face, she was deeply moved by seeing tears flowing down his withered cheeks. The tears of an old man are as terrible as those of a child are natural.

'What, oh, what is the matter with you?' she cried, falling at his feet and kissing his hands. 'Do you not trust me?'

'I, who only wish to satisfy your every wish, am compelled to cause the first great sorrow of your life! I

am as much grieved as you are! I never shed a tear but when my children died and my Ursule.—There, I will do anything you like!' he exclaimed.

Ursule, through her tears, gave her godfather a look that was like a flash of light. She smiled.

'Now, come into the drawing-room and contrive to keep your own counsel about all this, my child,' said the doctor, and he went out, leaving her alone in the study.

The fatherly soul was so weak before this smile that he was about to speak a word of hope which might have deluded his goddaughter.

At this moment Madame de Portenduère, alone with the curé in her chilly little ground-floor drawing-room, had just finished confiding her woes to the good priest, her only friend. She held in her hand some letters which the Abbé had returned to her after reading them, and which had been the crown of her misery. Seated in an armchair, on one side of the square table covered with the remains of the dessert, the old lady looked at the curé, who, on the other, huddled into a deep chair, was stroking his chin with that strange gesture peculiar to the stage valet, to mathematicians, and priests, as betraying meditation on a problem difficult of solution.

The little room, lighted by two windows looking on the street, and lined with wainscotting painted grey, was so damp that the lower panels displayed the geometrical crackle of decaying wood when it is no longer held together by paint. The floor, of red tiles rubbed smooth by the lady's only servant, made little round hempen mats a necessity in front of each chair, and on one of these mats were the Abbé's feet. The curtains, of light-green flowered damask, were drawn, and the shutters closed. Two wax-candles lighted the table; the rest of the room was half dark. Need it be said that between the windows a fine pastel by Latour showed the portrait of the famous Admiral de

Portenduère, the rival of Suffren, of Kergarouët, of Guichen, of Simeuse? On the wainscot opposite the chimney might be seen the Vicomte de Portenduère and the old lady's mother, a Kergarouët-Ploëgat.

Savinien, then, was great-nephew to Vice-Admiral Kergarouët, and cousin to the Comte de Portenduère, the Admiral's grandson, both of them very rich. The Vice-Admiral lived in Paris, and the Comte de Portenduère at his château of the same name in Dauphiné. The Count, his cousin, represented the elder branch, and Savinien was the only scion of the younger branch of the Portenduères.

The Count, a man of past forty, married to a rich wife, had three children. His fortune, augmented several times by inheritance, brought him in, it was said, sixty thousand francs a year. He represented the department of the Isère as deputy, spending the winter in Paris, where he had repurchased the mansion of the Portenduères with the indemnity paid him under Villèle's act. The Vice-Admiral had lately married his niece,* Mademoiselle de Fontaine, solely to settle his fortune on her. Thus the young Vicomte's errors had perhaps deprived him of the interest of two powerful friends.

Savinien, young and handsome, if he had entered the navy, with his name and the interest of an admiral and of a deputy to back him, might perhaps at three-and-twenty have been already first-lieutenant; but his mother, averse to seeing her only son engage in a military career, had had him educated at Nemours by one of the Abbé Chaperon's curates, and had flattered herself that she might keep her son at her side till her death. She had hoped to marry him very prudently to a demoiselle d'Aiglemont, with twelve thousand francs a year; the name of Portenduère, and the farm-lands of Bordières, justifying his pretensions to her hand. This moderate but judicious scheme, which might have re-established

* See *Le Bal de Sceaux*.

the family in another generation, had been frustrated by events. The d'Aiglemonts were now ruined, and one of their daughters, Hélène, the eldest, had vanished without any explanation being offered by the family.

The tedium of a life devoid of out-door interests, of purpose, and of action, with nothing to support it but the love of a son for his mother, so wearied Savinien that he burst his bonds, light as they were, and vowed he would never live in a country town; discovering, somewhat late, that his future did not lie in the Rue des Bourgeois. So at one-and-twenty he left his mother to introduce himself to his relations, and try his fortune in Paris.

The contrast between life at Nemours and life in the capital could not fail to be fatal to a youth of one-and-twenty, perfectly free, with no one to contradict him, of course greedy for pleasure, and to whom the name of Portenduère and the wealth of his connections opened every drawing-room. Convinced that his mother had somewhere stored the savings of twenty years, Savinien had soon squandered the six thousand francs she had given him to spend in Paris. This sum did not defray the expenses of the first six months, and by that time he owed twice as much to his lodging-keeper, his tailor, his bootmaker, to a man from whom he hired carriages and horses, to a jeweller, in short, to all the tradespeople who supply the luxury of youth. He had hardly achieved making himself known, had hardly learned to speak, to enter a room, to wear and choose a waistcoat, to order his clothes and tie his cravat, when he found himself possessed of thirty thousand francs of debts, and had not yet got further than trying to find an insinuating phrase in which to declare his passion to Madame de Sérizy, the sister of the Marquis de Ronquerolles, an elegant woman still, whose youth had shone through the Empire.

'And how did you fellows get out of the scrape?' said Savinien one day after breakfast to some young men of

fashion with whom he was intimate, as even at this day young men become intimate when their pretensions in all respects tend to the same ends, and when they proclaim an impossible equality. 'You were no richer than I; you live on without a care, you support yourselves, and I am already in debt.'

'We all began in the same way,' they replied, with a laugh—Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré, Maxime de Trailles, Emile Blondet, the dandies of that day.

'If de Marsay was rich at beginning life, it was a mere chance!' said their host, a parvenu named Finot, who tried to rub elbows with these young men. 'And if he had been any one else,' he added, bowing to Marsay, 'his fortune might have been his ruin.'

'You have hit the word,' said Maxime de Trailles.

'And the idea too,' replied Rastignac.

'My dear boy,' said de Marsay gravely to Savinien, 'debts are the sleeping partners of experience. A good college education, with masters for the ornamental and the useful, from which you learn nothing, costs sixty thousand francs. If the education the world gives you costs double, it teaches you life, business, and politics; to know men, and sometimes women.'

Blondet capped the lecture by a parody on a line of La Fontaine's—

'The world sells us dear what we fancy it gives!'

But instead of reflecting on the good sense in what the most skilled pilots of the Paris shoals had said, Savinien took it all as a jest.

'Take care, my dear fellow,' said de Marsay, 'you have a fine name, and if you cannot acquire the fortune your name demands, you may end your days as quartermaster to a cavalry regiment,

"For nobler heads than thine have had a fall,"'

he added, quoting Corneille, and taking Savinien's arm.

'It is about six years,' he went on, 'since a certain young Comte d'Esgrignon came among us, who did not live more than two years in the paradise of fashion! Alas, his career was as that of the sky-rocket. He rose as high as the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and he fell into his native town, where he is now expiating his sins between a snuffling old father and rubbers of whist at two sous a point. Go, then, and frankly explain your position to Madame de Sérizy; do not be ashamed; she will be of great use to you; whereas, if you play a charade of first love, she will pose as a Raphael Madonna, play innocent games, and send you a most expensive excursion round the "Pays du Tendre."'

Savinien, still too young and too sensitive to a gentleman's honour, dared not confess the state of his fortunes to Madame de Sérizy. Madame de Portenduère, at a moment when her son knew not which way to turn, sent him twenty thousand francs, all she had, in answer to a letter in which Savinien, taught by his companions the tactics of assault by sons on their parents' strong-boxes, hinted at bills to meet, and the disgrace of dishonouring his endorsements. With this help, he got on to the end of the first year. During the second year, as a captive at the wheels of Madame de Sérizy's car—for she had taken a serious fancy to him, and was teaching him his paces—he availed himself of the perilous aid of money-lenders. A deputy, named des Lupeaulx, who was his friend, and a friend of his cousin de Portenduère, introduced him one miserable day to Gobseck, to Gigonnet, and to Palma, who, being duly and fully informed as to the value of his mother's property, made things easy for him. The money-lenders, by the delusive aid of renewals, gave him a happy life for about eighteen months more. Without daring to neglect Madame de Sérizy, the hapless boy fell desperately in love with the young Comtesse de Kergarouët, a prude, as all young women are who are waiting for the death of an old husband, and who are

clever enough to save up their virtue for a second marriage. Savinien, unable to understand that virtue based on reasons is invincible, paid his court to Emilie de Kergarouët with all the display of a rich man; he was never missing from a ball or a theatre if she was to be there.

'My boy, you have not enough powder to blow up that rock!' de Marsay said to him one evening, with a laugh.

This young prince of Paris fashion vainly attempted, out of commiseration, to make the lad understand Emilie de Fontaine's character; only the gloomy light of disaster and the darkness of a prison could enlighten Savinien. A bill of exchange, rashly assigned to a jeweller in collusion with the money-lenders, who did not choose to take the odium of arresting him, led to Savinien de Portenduère's being consigned to Sainte-Pélagie, unknown to his friends. As soon as the news was known to Rastignac, de Marsay, and Lucien de Rubempré, they all three went to see Savinien, and, finding him absolutely destitute, each offered him a note for a thousand francs. His own servant, bribed by two creditors, had led them to the apartment where Savinien lodged in secret, and everything had been seized but the clothes and a few trinkets he had on him.

The three young men, fortified by a capital dinner, while they drank some sherry that de Marsay had brought with him, catechised Savinien as to the state of his affairs, ostensibly to make arrangements for the future, but in reality, no doubt, to pass sentence on him.

'When your name is Savinien de Portenduère,' cried Rastignac, 'when you have a future peer of France for your cousin, and the Admiral de Kergarouët for your grand-uncle, if you are such a blunderer as to let yourself be sent to Sainte-Pélagie, at any rate you must get out of it, my dear fellow!'

'Why did you say nothing about it to me?' cried de Marsay. 'My travelling carriage was at your orders, ten

thousand francs, and letters for Germany. We know Gobseck and Gigonnet, and the other beasts of prey; we would have brought them to terms. To begin with, what ass brought you to drink of these poisoned waters?' asked de Marsay.

'Des Lupeaulx.'

The three young men looked at each other, communicating the same thought, a suspicion, but without speaking it.

'Explain your resources; show us your hand,' said de Marsay.

When Savinien had described his mother and her cap and bows, her little house with its three windows fronting on the Rue des Bourgeois, with no garden but a yard with a well, and an outhouse to hold fire-logs; when he had estimated the value of this dwelling, built of rough stone set in reddish cement, and that of the farm of Bordières, the three dandies exchanged glances, and, with a look of deep meaning, quoted the word spoken by the Abbé in Alfred de Musset's play *les Marrons du feu*—for his *Contes d'Espagne* had just come out—

'Dismal!'

'Your mother would pay in response to a skilful letter,' said Rastignac.

'Yes; but after——?' cried de Marsay.

'If you had only been put into the hackney coach,' said Lucien, 'the King's Government would give you a berth in a foreign mission; but Sainte-Pélagie is not the anteroom to an Embassy.'

'You are not up to the mark for life in Paris,' said Rastignac.

'Let's see,' de Marsay began, looking at Savinien from head to foot as a horse-dealer examines a horse. 'You have good blue eyes well set, you have a well-shaped white forehead, splendid black hair, a neat little moustache which looks well on your pale skin, and a slight figure; your foot bespeaks a good breed, shoulders and chest

strong, and not too like a coalheaver's. I should call you a good specimen of a dark man. Your face is in the style of that of Louis XIII.; not much colour, and a well-shaped nose; and you have besides the thing that appeals to woman, the indescribable something of which men themselves are never conscious, which is in the air, the walk, the tone of voice, the flash of the eyes, the gesture, a hundred little things which women see, and to which they attach a meaning which eludes us. You do not know yourself, my dear fellow. With a little style, in six months you could fascinate an Englishwoman with a hundred thousand francs, especially if you use the title of Vicomte de Portenduère to which you have a right. My charming mother-in-law, Lady Dudley, who has not her equal for skewering two hearts together, will discover the damsel for you in some alluvial district of Great Britain. But then you must be able to stave off your debts for ninety days, and know how to do it by some skilful stroke of high finance. Oh! why did you say nothing of it to me? At Baden these money-lenders would have respected you, have served you perhaps; but after clapping you in prison they despise you. The money-lender is like society, like the mob—on his knees to a man who is clever enough to take advantage of him, and pitiless to a lamb. In the eyes of a certain set, Sainte-Pélagie is a demon which takes the shine off a young man's soul to a terrible extent. Will you have my opinion, my dear boy? I say to you as I did to little d'Esgrignon: Pay your debts cautiously, keeping enough to live on for three years, and get married in the country to the first girl who has thirty thousand francs a year. In three years you will be sure to have found some suitable heiress who will gladly hear herself called Madame de Portenduère. These are the words of wisdom. Let us have a drink. I propose a toast: "To the girl with money!"'

The young men did not leave their ex-friend till the

official hour of parting, and on the threshold of the gate they said to each other, 'He is not game!—He is very much crushed!—Will he pick himself up again?'

The next day Savinien wrote to his mother, a general confession covering twenty-two pages. Madame de Portenduère, after crying for a whole day, wrote first to her son, promising to get him out of prison, and then to the Comtes de Portenduère and de Kergarouët.

The letters the curé had just read, and which the poor mother now held in her hand, moist with her tears, had reached her that morning, and had broken her heart.

'PARIS, *September* 1829.

To Madame de Portenduère.

'MADAME,—You cannot doubt the great interest which the admiral takes in your troubles. The news you write to M. de Kergarouët distresses me all the more because my house was open to your son; we were proud of him. If Savinien had had more confidence in the admiral, we would have taken him in charge, and he would now have a suitable appointment; but the unhappy boy told us nothing! The admiral could not possibly pay a hundred thousand francs; he is himself in debt, and has involved himself for me, for I knew nothing of his pecuniary position. He regrets it all the more because Savinien, by allowing himself to be arrested, has for the moment tied our hands. If my handsome nephew had not felt for me some foolish passion which smothered the voice of relationship in the arrogance of a lover, we might have sent him to travel in Germany while his affairs here were being arranged. M. de Kergarouët might have asked for a place for his grand-nephew in the naval department; but imprisonment for debt cannot fail to paralyse the admiral's efforts. Pay off Savinien's debts, let him go into the navy; he will then make his way like a true Porten-

duère ; he has their fire in his fine black eyes, and we will all help him.

'So do not despair, Madame ; you still have friends, among whom I beg to be accounted one of the sincerest, and I send you my best wishes with every respect.—From your very devoted servant,

'Emilie de Kergarouët.'

'Portenduère, *August* 1829.

To Madame de Portenduère.

'My Dear Aunt,—I am as much vexed as pained by Savinien's scapegrace doings. Married, as I am, the father of two sons and a daughter, my fortune, moderate indeed in comparison with my position and expectations, does not allow of my reducing it by such a sum as a hundred thousand francs to ransom a Portenduère captive to the Lombards. Sell your farm, pay his debts, and come to Portenduère ; you will here find the welcome due to you from us, even if our hearts were not wholly yours. You will live happy, and we will find a wife for Savinien, whom my wife thinks charming. This disaster is nothing ; do not let it distress you ; it will never be heard of in our remote district, where we know several girls with money—nay, very rich—who will be enchanted to belong to us.

'My wife joins me in assuring you how happy you would make us, and begs you to accept her hopes that this plan may be carried out, with the assurance of our affectionate respect.

'Luc-Savinien, Comte de Portenduère.'

'What letters to write to a Kergarouët !' cried the old Bretonne, wiping her eyes.

'The admiral does not know that his nephew is in prison,' said the Abbé Chaperon presently. 'Only the

Countess has read your letter, and she alone has answered it. But something must be done,' he added after a pause, 'and this is the advice I have the honour to offer you. Do not sell your farm. The present lease is nearly out; it has been running four-and-twenty years; in a few months you can raise the rent to six thousand francs, and demand a premium equal to two years' rent. Borrow from some honest man—not from the townspeople, who make a traffic of mortgages. Your neighbour, now, is a worthy man, a man of the world, who knew the upper classes before the Revolution, and who from being an Atheist has become a Catholic. Do not feel any repugnance for coming to call on him this evening; he will be deeply sensible of your taking such a step; forget for one moment that you are a Kergarouët.'

'Never!' said the old mother in a strident tone.

'At any rate, be an amiable Kergarouët. Come when he is alone; he will only take three-and-a-half per cent., perhaps not more than three, and he will do you the service in the most delicate manner. You will be quite satisfied with him. He will go himself to release Savinien, for he will be obliged to sell some securities, and he will bring him home to you.'

'Do you mean that little Minoret?'

'Little Minoret is eighty-three years of age,' replied the Abbé with a smile. 'My dear lady, have a little Christian charity; do not hurt his feelings, he may be useful to you in more ways than one.'

'How, may I ask?'

'Well, he has living with him an angel, the heavenliest young girl——'

'Yes, that little Ursule.—Well, and what then?'

The poor curé dared say no more as he heard this.

'Well, what then?' Its harsh severity cut short beforehand the proposal he had been about to make.

'Doctor Minoret is, I believe, exceedingly rich——'

'So much the better for him.'

'You have already been the indirect cause of your son's present misfortunes by giving him no opening in life. Beware for the future,' said the Abbé sternly. 'Shall I announce your proposed visit to your neighbour?'

'But why, if he were told that I want him, should he not come to me?'

'Well, madame, if you go to him, you will pay three per cent., and if he comes to you, you will pay five,' said the Abbé, hitting on this argument to persuade the old lady. 'And if you should be forced to sell your farm through Dionis the notary, or Massin the clerk, who would refuse to advance money in the hope of profiting by your disaster, you would lose half the value of Les Bordières. I have not the smallest influence over the Dionis, the Massins, the Levraults, rich country folks who covet your farm, and know that your son is in prison.'

'They know it! They know it!' she cried, throwing up her hands.—'Oh, my poor friend, you have let your coffee get cold.—Tiennette! Tiennette!'

Tiennette, an old Brittany peasant of sixty, in the jacket and cap of her province, hastened in and took the curé's coffee to heat it again.

'Wait a minute, Monsieur le Recteur,' said she, seeing that the curé was about to drink it. 'I will heat it in a bain-marie, and it will be none the worse.'

'Very well, then,' the priest began again, in his persuasive voice, 'I will give the doctor notice of your intended visit, and you will come.'

The old lady still would not give in till at the end of an hour's discussion, during which the curé was forced to repeat his arguments ten times over. And even then the haughty daughter of the Kergarouëts only yielded to these last words—

'Savinien would go!'

'Then it had better be I,' said she.

Nine o'clock was striking when the little door in the great gate closed behind the curé, who forthwith rang eagerly at the doctor's entrance. The Abbé Chaperon escaped Tiennette to fall on La Bougival, for the old nurse said to him—

'You are very late, Monsieur le Curé!' Just as Tiennette had said, 'Why have you left Madame so early when she is in trouble?'

The curé found a large party in the doctor's green and brown drawing-room; for Dionis had been to reassure the heirs on his way to see Massin, and repeat to him his uncle's words.

'Ursule,' said he, 'has I suspect a love in her heart which will bring her nothing but sorrow and care. She seems to be romantic'—the word applied by notaries to a sensitive nature—'and she will long remain unmarried. So do not be suspicious; pay her all sorts of little attentions, and be the humble servants of your uncle, for he is sharper than a hundred Goupils,' added the notary, not knowing that Goupil is a corrupt form of the Latin *vulpes*, a fox.

So Mesdames Massin and Crémière, their husbands, the postmaster and Désiré, with the town doctor and Bongrand, formed an unwonted and turbulent crowd at the old doctor's. As the Abbé went in he heard the sound of a piano. Poor Ursule was ending Beethoven's sonata in A. With the artfulness permissible to the innocent, the girl, enlightened by her godfather, and averse to the family, had selected this solemn music, which must be studied to be appreciated, to disgust these women with their wish to hear her. The finer the music, the less the ignorant enjoy it. So, when the door opened and the Abbé Chaperon put in his venerable head, 'Ah! here is Monsieur le Curé!' they all exclaimed, delighted to have to rise and put an end to their torment.

The exclamation found an echo at the card-table, where Bongrand, the town doctor, and the old man himself were victims to the audacity with which the tax-collector, to court his great-uncle, had proposed to take the fourth hand at whist. Ursule came away from the piano. The doctor also rose as if to greet the priest, but in fact to put a stop to the game. After many compliments to their uncle on his goddaughter's proficiency, the heirs took their leave.

'Good-night, friends,' cried the doctor, as the gate shut.

'So that is what costs so dear!' said Madame Crémière to Madame Massin, when they had gone a little way.

'God forbid that I should pay any money to hear my little Aline make such a noise as that in the house!' replied Madame Massin.

'She said it was by Beethoven, who is supposed to be a great composer,' said the tax-collector. 'He has a great name.'

'My word! not at Nemours,' cried Madame Crémière.

'I believe my uncle arranged it on purpose that we should never go there again,' said Massin. 'For he certainly winked as he pointed out the green volume to that little minx.'

'If that is the only tune they care to dance to, they are wise to keep themselves to themselves,' said the post-master.

'The Justice must be very fond of his game to listen to those rigmarole pieces,' said Madame Crémière.

'I shall never be able to play to people who do not understand music,' said Ursule, taking her seat near the card-table.

'In persons of a rich organisation feeling can only express itself among congenial surroundings,' said the

curé. 'Just as a priest can give no blessing in the presence of the Evil One, and as a chestnut tree dies in a heavy soil, so a musician of genius feels himself morally routed when he is among ignorant listeners. In the arts we need to receive from the souls in which our souls find their medium as much power as we can impart. This axiom, which is a law of human affections, has given rise to the proverbs: "We must howl with the wolves"; "Like to like." But the discomfort you must have felt is known only to tender and sensitive natures.'

'Ay, my friends,' said the doctor, 'and a thing which might only annoy another woman could kill my little Ursule. Ah! when I am no more, raise up between this tender flower and the world such a sheltering hedge as Catullus speaks of—*Ut flos*, etc.'

'And yet the ladies were flattering in their remarks to you, Ursule,' said the lawyer, smiling.

'Coarsely flattering,' observed the town doctor.

'I have always felt such coarseness in insincere praise,' replied Monsieur Minoret. 'And why?'

'A true thought has its own refinement,' said the Abbé.

'Did you dine with Madame de Portenduère?' said Ursule, questioning the Abbé Chaperon, with a glance of anxious curiosity.

'Yes; the poor lady is in much distress, and it is not impossible that she may call on you this evening, Monsieur Minoret.'

'If she is in trouble and needs me, I will go to her,' said the doctor. 'Let us finish the first rubber.'

Ursule pressed her uncle's hand under the table.

'Her son,' said the Justice, 'was rather too simple to live in Paris without a mentor.' 'When it came to my knowledge that inquiries were being made of the notary here about the old lady's farm, I guessed that he was borrowing on his reversion.'

'Do you think him capable of that?' said Ursule,

with a terrible flash at Monsieur Bongrand, who said to himself, 'Yes, alas! she is in love with him.'

'Yes and No,' said the town doctor. 'There is good in Savinien, and the proof of it is that he is in prison. A thorough rogue never gets caught.'

'My friends,' said old Minoret, 'enough of this for this evening. We must not leave a poor mother to weep for a minute longer when we can dry her tears.'

The four friends rose and went out. Ursule accompanied them as far as the gate, watched her godfather and the curé while they knocked at the door opposite; and when Tiennette had admitted them, she sat down on one of the stone piers in the courtyard, La Bougival standing near her.

'Madame la Vicomtesse,' said the curé, going first into the little room, 'Doctor Minoret could not allow you to have the trouble of going to his house——'

'I am too much of the old school, Madame,' the doctor put in, 'not to know what is due from a man to a person of your rank, and I am only too happy to think, from what Monsieur le Curé tells me, that I may be of some service to you.'

Madame de Portenduère, on whom the arrangement she had agreed to weighed so heavily, that, since the Abbé had quitted her, she had thought of applying rather to the notary, was so surprised by Minoret's delicate feeling, that she rose to return his bow, and pointed to an armchair.

'Be seated, Monsieur,' said she, with a royal air. 'Our dear curé will have told you that the Vicomte is in prison for debt—a young man's debts—a hundred thousand francs. If you could lend him the sum, I would give you as security my farm at Bordières.'

'We can talk of that, Madame, when I shall have brought you back your son, if you will allow me to represent you in these circumstances.'

'Very good, Monsieur,' replied the old lady, with a

bow, and a glance at the curé, which was meant to convey: 'You are right; he is a man of good breeding.'

'My friend the doctor, as you see, Madame, is full of devotion to your family.'

'We shall be grateful to you, Monsieur,' said Madame de Portenduère, with a visible effort, 'for at your age to venture through Paris on the tracks of a scapegrace's misdeeds——'

'Madame, in '65, I had the honour of seeing the illustrious Admiral de Portenduère at the house of the worthy Monsieur de Malesherbes, and at that of the Comte de Buffon, who was anxious to question him as to various curious facts in his voyages. It is not impossible that Monsieur de Portenduère, your late husband, may have been there too. The French navy was then in its glory; it held its own against England, and the Captain contributed his quota of courage to the game. How impatiently, in '83 and '84, did we await news from the camp of Saint-Roch! I was very near joining as surgeon to the King's forces. Your grand-uncle, Admiral de Kergarouët, who is still living, fought his great battle at that time, for he was on board the *Belle Poule*.'

'Ah! if he knew that his grand-nephew was in prison!'

'The Vicomte will no longer be there two days hence,' said old Minoret, rising.

He put out his hand to take the old lady's, who allowed him to do so; he kissed it respectfully, bowed low, and went out; but he came in again to say to the curé—

'Will you, my dear Abbé, secure a place for me in the diligence for to-morrow morning?'

The curé remained another half-hour to sing the praises of the doctor, who had intended to conquer the old lady, and had succeeded.

'He is wonderful for his age,' said she. 'He talks of going to Paris and settling my son's affairs as if he were

no more than five-and-twenty. He has moved in good society.'

'In the best, Madame; and at this day, more than one son of an impoverished peer of France would be very happy to marry his ward with a million of francs. Ah, if such a notion should enter Savinien's brain, times are so altered that the chief difficulties would not be raised on your side after your son's conduct!'

It was the intense amazement with which the old lady heard this speech that allowed the priest to finish it.

'You have lost your wits, my dear Abbé Chaperon.'

'Think it over, Madame; and God grant that henceforth your son may behave in such a way as to acquire that old man's esteem!'

'If it were not you, Monsieur le Curé,' said Madame de Portenduère; 'if it were any one else who spoke to me in these terms——'

'You would never see him again,' said the Abbé, smiling. 'We must hope that your dear son may enlighten you as to what is doing in Paris in the matter of marriages. You will consider Savinien's happiness, and, after compromising his future, you will surely not interfere with his making himself a position.'

'And it is you who say this to me!'

'If I did not, who would?' cried the priest, rising, and beating a prompt retreat.

The curé saw Ursule and her godfather walking up and down the little courtyard. The submissive doctor had been so teased by his ward that he had at last yielded; she wanted to go to Paris, and had found a thousand pretexts. He called the curé, who joined them, and the doctor begged him to engage the coupé of the diligence for that very night if the coach-office were still open.

At six o'clock on the following afternoon the old man and the young girl reached Paris, and the doctor went, the same evening, to consult his lawyer. Political events looked threatening. The Justice at Nemours had been telling

the doctor the day before, several times in the course of their conversation, that he would be nothing less than mad to keep a penny in the funds so long as the quarrel between the Court and the Press should remain unsettled. Minoret's notary approved of the advice indirectly given by Bongrand. So the doctor took advantage of his visit to Paris to sell out his commercial investments and state securities, which were all at a premium, and to deposit his capital in the bank. The lawyer also advised his old client to sell the shares left to Ursule by Monsieur Jordy, which, as a good trustee, he had invested. He promised to set to work with the help of a very knowing agent, to come to terms with Savinien's creditors; but to achieve every success, it was necessary that the young man should spend yet a few days in prison.

'Hurrying on these matters costs at least fifteen per cent.,' said the lawyer to the doctor. 'And at any rate you cannot get at your money for seven or eight days.'

When Ursule learned that Savinien would be in prison at least a week longer, she entreated her guardian to let her go there with him, if only for once. Old Minoret refused. The uncle and niece were lodging at an hotel in the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, where the doctor had taken a suitable set of rooms; and knowing his ward's religious honour, he made her promise never to go out while he was absent on business. The kind old man took her for walks about Paris, showing her the arcades, the shops, the Boulevards—but nothing interested or amused her.

'What do you want?' asked he.

'To see Sainte-Pélagie,' she persistently replied.

Then Minoret hired a hackney coach, and took her to the Rue de la Clef, where the vehicle drew up in front of the squalid building—an ancient convent turned into a prison. The sight of the high grey walls, where every window was closely barred, of the low door, not to be entered without stooping—dreadful lesson!—the gloomy

mass standing in a neighbourhood full of poverty, where it rises in the midst of deserted streets, itself the supreme misery; the whole combination of dismal ideas choked Ursule, and made her shed tears.

'How is it,' said she, 'that young men can be imprisoned for money? How is it that a debt gives to a money-lender such power as the King himself does not possess?—And *he* is there!' she exclaimed. 'Where, godfather?' she added, looking from one window to another.

'Ursule,' said her godfather, 'you make me commit follies. This is not forgetting him!'

'But,' said she, 'even if I must give him up, must I feel no interest in him? I may love him, and marry no one.'

'Oh!' cried the old man, 'there is so much method in your madness, that I repent of having brought you.'

Three days later the old man had the receipts in due form, the title-deeds, and all the documents which were necessary to liberate Savinien. The liquidation, including the agent's commission, had been effected for the sum of eighty thousand francs. The doctor had in hand eight hundred thousand francs, which, by his lawyer's advice, he placed in treasury notes, so as not to lose too much interest. He kept twenty thousand in bank notes for Savinien.

The doctor himself went to release him on Saturday at two o'clock, and the young Vicomte, already informed by a letter from his mother, thanked his deliverer with sincere effusiveness of feeling.

'You must not delay in coming home to see your mother,' said old Minoret.

Savinien replied, in some confusion, that even in prison he had contracted a debt of honour; and he told the doctor of the visit of his three friends.

'I suspected you might have some personal debts,' said the doctor with a smile. 'Your mother has borrowed a

hundred thousand francs, but I have paid no more than eighty thousand; here is the remainder, use it with thrift, Monsieur, and regard what is left as your stake on the green cloth of fortune.'

During the past week Savinien had reflected on the times he lived in. Competition on all sides demands severe labour from those who hope to make a fortune. Illegal methods require more talent and underhand manœuvres, than enterprise under the light of day. Success in the gay world, far from securing a position, absorbs time and a great deal of money. The name of Portenduère, omnipotent according to his mother, was nothing in Paris. His cousin the deputy, the Comte de Portenduère, cut but a small figure in the midst of the elective Chamber in comparison with the Peerage and the Court, and had no more influence than enough for himself. Admiral Kergarouët existed only in the person of his wife. He had seen orators, men who had risen from a social rank beneath the nobility or the simple gentry, become personages of importance. In short, money was the pivot, the only means, the only motor of a society which Louis XVIII. had tried to form in imitation of that of England.

On his way from the Rue de la Clef to the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, the young gentleman summed up his meditations, and laid them before the old doctor, in accordance with de Marsay's advice.

'I must let myself be forgotten,' said he, 'for three or four years, and try to find a career. Perhaps I may make a name in political diplomacy or in moral statistics, by some treatise on one of the great questions of the day. At any rate, while finding some young person whom I may marry, and whose position may qualify me for election, I shall work in silence and obscurity.'

The doctor studied the young man's countenance, and saw in it the fixed purpose of a man who, having been

wounded, hopes for revenge. He greatly approved this scheme.

'My young neighbour,' said he, 'if you have cast the skin of the old nobility—which is not found to be good wear nowadays—after three or four years of a steady industrious life, I will undertake to find you a superior girl, pretty, amiable, pious, and with a fortune of seven or eight hundred thousand francs, who will make you happy, and of whom you may be proud, though she has no nobility but that of the heart.'

'Eh, doctor!' cried the young man, 'there is no nobility left—only an aristocracy.'

'Go and pay your debts of honour, and return here. I will go to engage the coupé of the diligence, for my ward is with me,' said the old man.

That evening, at six o'clock, the three travellers set out from the Rue Dauphine by the 'Ducler.' Ursule, who wore a veil, spoke not a word. After blowing her the kiss in an impulse of trivial flirtation, which had upset Ursule as much as a whole book of love, Savinien had totally forgotten the doctor's ward in the torments of his debts; and, indeed, his hopeless adoration of Emilie de Kergarouët did not suffer him to bestow a remembrance on the glances he had interchanged with a mere little girl at Nemours. So he did not recognise her when the old man made her get first into the coach and sat next her, dividing her from the young Vicomte.

'I have accounts to settle with you,' said the doctor to the youth; 'I have all your papers here.'

'I was within an ace of not getting away,' said Savinien. 'I had to order clothes and linen; the Philistines have robbed me of everything, and I am in the state of the prodigal son.'

However interesting the subjects of conversation between the old man and the young one, however pertinent some of Savinien's remarks, the young girl sat

in silence till it was dark, her green veil hiding her face, and her hands folded over her shawl.

'You do not seem to have found Paris very delightful, Mademoiselle,' said Savinien at last, somewhat piqued.

'I am glad to return to Nemours,' she replied in an agitated voice, putting up her veil.

In spite of the gloom, Savinien now recognised her by her thick plaits of hair and brilliant blue eyes.

'And, for my part, I can leave Paris without regret to bury myself at Nemours, since I there shall find so fair a neighbour,' said he. 'I hope, Monsieur le Docteur, that you will allow me to visit you; I am fond of music, and I remember hearing Mademoiselle Ursule's piano.'

'I hardly know, Monsieur,' said the doctor gravely, 'whether your mother will be pleased that you should come to see an old man who is obliged to have a mother's care of this dear child.'

This measured reply gave Savinien much to think about; he now recollected that kiss, so lightly wafted.

It was now night; the heat was oppressive; the doctor and Savinien were the first to fall asleep. Ursule, who remained a long time awake, her head full of plans, succumbed about midnight. She had taken off her little hat of coarse straw plait. Her head, in a little cap of embroidered muslin, presently dropped on to her godfather's shoulder. At daybreak, near Bouron, Savinien woke the first. He saw Ursule in the untidy state produced by the jolting of the coach; her cap was tumbled and askew; her hair had come unpinned, and the plaits fell about her face, which was rosy with the heat; but in this disorder, which is horrible in a woman to whom dress is indispensable, youth and beauty are triumphant. The sleep of innocence is always lovely. Her parted lips showed pretty teeth; her shawl, thrown back, allowed him to observe, without offence to Ursule, the grace of her figure under the folds of a full bodice of flowered muslin. And through the countenance shone

the purity of the maiden soul, all the more visible because no other expression mingled with it. Old Minoret, who presently woke, arranged her head against the corner of the coach to make her more comfortable; and she did not even feel what he did, so soundly was she sleeping, after spending so many nights in thinking of Savinien's misfortunes.

'Poor little thing!' said he to his companion, 'she sleeps like a child—as she is.'

'You should be proud of her,' said Savinien, 'for she seems to be as good as she is pretty.'

'Ah! she is the light of the house! If she were my daughter, I could not love her better. She will be sixteen on the 5th February next. God grant I may live to see her married to a man who will make her happy! I wanted to take her to the play in Paris, where she had never been before; she would not go; the curé at Nemours had forbidden it. "But," said I, "when you are married, if your husband wishes to take you?"—"I shall do whatever my husband desires," said she. "If he should ask me to do anything wrong, and I should be so weak as to obey him, he will be held responsible before God; but I should find strength to resist—in his interest, of course."'

As they reached Nemours, at five in the morning, Ursule woke up, quite ashamed of her untidiness, and of meeting Savinien's gaze of frank admiration. During the hour which the diligence took to drive from Bouron, where it had stopped a few minutes, the young man had fallen in love with Ursule. He had studied the innocence of her soul, the beauty of her person, the whiteness of her complexion, the delicacy of her features, and the sweet voice which had spoken the brief expressive phrase in which the poor child had told everything while intending to tell nothing. In short, I know not what presentiment led him to think of Ursule as the wife the doctor

had suggested to him, set in a gold frame by the magical words—'Seven or eight hundred thousand francs.'

'In three or four years she will be twenty; I shall be twenty-seven. The good man spoke of struggles, of work, of good behaviour. However cunning he may be, he will end by telling me his secret.'

The neighbours parted before their respective houses, and Savinien put much meaning into his leave-taking, with a glance at Ursule full of imploring invitation.

Madame de Portenduère left her son to sleep till noon. The doctor and Ursule, in spite of their fatiguing journey, went to high mass.

Savinien's release, and his return in the doctor's company, had explained the object of his journey to the parochial politicians and to his heirs, who had met in council in the Church Square, as they had done a fortnight since. To the great surprise of all parties, on coming out of church, Madame de Portenduère stopped old Minoret, who offered her his arm, and conducted her home. The old lady wished to invite him and his ward to dinner that same day, telling him that the curé would be her other guest.

'He wanted to let Ursule see Paris,' said Minoret-Levrault.

'Damnation! The old man cannot stir a step without his little housekeeper,' cried Crémière.

'There must have been some very private transactions between them, for Mother Portenduère to take his arm,' observed Massin.

'It has not occurred to you that your uncle has sold his investments and taken the young 'un out of quod!' cried Goupil. 'He refused my master, but he did not refuse his Madam. . . . Ah! your goose is cooked! The Vicomte will propose a marriage-contract instead of a promise to pay, and the doctor will make the husband settle on his goddaughter all the money he will have to give her to secure such a match.'

'It would not be such a bad stroke of business to marry Ursule to Monsieur Savinien,' said the butcher. 'The old lady is having them to dine with her to-day; Tiennette came over to me at five in the morning to secure a fillet of beef.'

'Well, Dionis, this is a pretty piece of work!' said Massin, hurrying to meet the notary, who came out on to the Square.

'Why, what's wrong?' said the notary. 'All is well; your uncle has sold his securities, and Madame de Portenduère has asked me to go to her house to witness a deed acknowledging a loan of a hundred thousand francs from your uncle on a mortgage of her estates.'

'Yes; but if the young folks were to marry each other?'

'You might as well say if Goupil were to be my successor,' said the notary.

'Neither case is impossible,' said Goupil.

On returning from mass, the old lady sent Tiennette to desire her son to come to her room.

The little house had three rooms on the ground floor. Those of Madame de Portenduère and of her deceased husband were on the same side of the house, divided by a dressing-room with a borrowed light, and a small anteroom opening on to the stairs. The window of the third room, which had always been Savinien's, looked out on the street, as did that of his father's. The staircase lay behind it in such a way as to leave space for a little dressing-room adjoining, with a small round window to the courtyard.

Madame de Portenduère's room, the gloomiest in the house, also looked on the yard; but the widow spent her life in the sitting-room on the ground floor, which communicated by a passage with the kitchen built on the further side of the courtyard; so that this room did duty both as drawing-room and dining-room.

The room that had been Monsieur de Portenduère's remained in the state in which it had been left on the day of his death; the dead man alone was missing. Madame de Portenduère herself had made the bed, and laid upon it the captain's uniform, with her husband's sword, red ribbon, orders, and hat. The gold snuff-box out of which the Vicomte had taken his last pinch of snuff was on the table by the bed, with his prayer-book, his watch, and the cup he used to drink out of. His white hair, arranged in a frame in a single thick curl, hung above the crucifix and holy water cup over the bed. Finally, the trifling objects of his daily use were all in their place—his papers, furniture, Dutch spittoon, and field-glass hanging over the fireplace. The widow had stopped the antique clock at the hour of his death, which it thus recorded in perpetuity. The scent of his powder and snuff still hung in the air. The hearth was as he had left it. To go into the room was like seeing him again, on finding all the things that thus spoke of his habits. His tall cane with its gold knob still lay where he had left it, and his large doeskin gloves close beside it. On the console stood a vase of solid gold, coarsely executed, but worth a thousand crowns, a present from the port of Havannah, which he had protected during the war of American Independence from an attack of the English, holding his own against a superior force, after getting the vessels under his convoy safe into harbour. As a reward the King of Spain had made him Knight of the Spanish Orders. For this achievement he was promoted on the first opportunity to the command of a squadron, and received the order of the Legion of Honour.

Then, on his next leave, he married his wife, with a fortune of two hundred thousand francs. But the Revolution stopped all further promotion, and Monsieur de Portenduère emigrated.

'Where is my mother?' asked Savinien of Tiennette.

'She is waiting for you in your father's room,' said the old Bretonne.

Savinien could not repress a little shudder. He knew how rigid were his mother's principles, her worship of honour, her loyalty, her faith in noble blood, and he foresaw a scene. So he went as if to lead a forlorn hope, his heart beating and his face almost pallid. In the twilight that filtered through the Venetian shutters he saw his mother dressed in black, and wearing a solemn mien in harmony with this chamber of the dead.

'Monsieur le Vicomte,' she said, rising as he entered, and taking his hand to lead him to the bedside, 'there your father died—a man of honour; died without having anything to reproach himself with. His spirit is above. He must indeed have groaned there to see his son disgraced by imprisonment for debt. Under the old monarchy you would have been spared this mud-stain, by craving a *lettre de cachet*, by which you would have been shut up for a few days in a State prison.—However, you now stand before your father, who can hear you. You, knowing all you had done before being taken to that squalid prison, can you swear to me, before that Shade, and before God who sees all things, that you have done no dishonourable action, that your debts were the consequence of a young man's follies—in short, that your honour is unspotted? If your blameless father were there, alive, in that armchair, if he could call you to account for your conduct, would he, after hearing you, embrace you still?'

'Yes, mother,' said the young man, with the most respectful gravity.

She opened her arms and clasped her son to her heart, shedding a few tears.

'Then let all be forgotten,' said she; 'we have lost nothing but the money. I will pray to God that it may be restored to us; and since you still are worthy of your name, kiss me, for I have suffered greatly.'

'I swear to you, my dear mother,' said he, holding out his hand over the bed, 'never again to give you the least trouble of the same kind, and to do all in my power to repair my past errors.'

'Come to breakfast, my child,' she said, and she left the room.

If the laws of the stage are to be applied to narrative, Savinien's arrival, by introducing at Nemours the only actor as yet missing from the personages of this little drama, here completes the prologue.

## PART II

### THE MINORET PROPERTY

The action began with a scene so hackneyed in literature, whether old or new, that no one would believe in its effect in 1829 if the principal figure were not an old lady of Brittany, a Kergarouët and an *émigrée*. But it must at once be made clear that in 1829 the nobility had reconquered in society some of the ground it had lost in political influence. Moreover, the feeling which governs grand-parents when matrimonial suitability is in question, is imperishable; it is closely implicated with the existence of civilised society, and founded in family spirit. It is supreme at Geneva as at Vienna, and as at Nemours, where Zélie Levrault had refused her consent to her son's marrying the daughter of a bastard.

Still, every social law has its exceptions. Savinien proposed trying to bend his mother's pride before Ursule's innate nobility. The battle began forthwith. As soon as he was seated at table his mother began to tell him of the dreadful letters, as she called them, written to her by the Kergarouëts and the Portenduères.

'The Family has ceased to exist, my dear mother,' replied Savinien. 'Nothing is left but the Individual. The nobility no longer form a compact body. Nowadays no one asks if you are a Portenduère, or if you are brave, or a statesman; all that any one inquires is, How much do you pay in rates and taxes?'

'And the King?' asked the old lady.

'The King stands between the two Chambers, like a man between his lawful wife and his mistress. So I must contrive to marry some rich girl whatever her family may be—a peasant's daughter if she has a million of francs, and if she is fairly well brought up, that is to say, if she comes from a convent-school.'

'This is quite another matter!' said the old lady.

Savinien knit his brows over this reply. He knew that granite will, called Breton obstinacy, which characterised his mother; and was anxious to know, as soon as possible, what her views were on this delicate subject.

'And so,' said he, 'if I should fall in love with a girl—say, for instance, our neighbour's ward, little Ursule—you would oppose my marrying her?'

'To my dying day,' said she. 'After my death you alone will be responsible for the honour and the blood of the Portenduères and the Kergarouëts.'

'Then you would leave me to die of hunger and despair for the sake of a chimera which, in these days, can only become real by acquiring the splendour of wealth.'

'You can serve France and trust in God.'

'You will postpone my happiness till the day after your death.'

'It will be horrible on your part, that is all.'

'Louis XIV. was very near marrying Mazarin's niece—a parvenu.'

'Mazarin himself opposed it.'

'And the widow Scarron?'

'She was a d'Aubigné! Besides, the marriage was

secret. But I am a very old woman, my son,' she added, shaking her head. 'When I am gone, you can marry to please your own fancy.'

Savinien loved and respected his mother; but at once, though in silence, he set against the obstinacy of the daughter of the Kergarouëts, an obstinacy equal to her own, and determined never to have any wife but Ursule, to whom this opposition gave all the charm of a forbidden joy—as always happens in such cases.

When, after vespers, Doctor Minoret, with Ursule, dressed in pink and white, entered the chill sitting-room, the poor child was seized with nervous trembling, just as if she had found herself in the presence of the Queen of France, and had some favour to ask of her. Since her talk with the doctor, the little house had assumed, to her, the proportions of a palace, and the old lady all the social importance that a duchess must have had in the eyes of a villein's daughter in the middle ages. Never had Ursule measured more hopelessly the distance which divided a Vicomte de Portenduère from the daughter of a bandmaster, a singer in the opera, the natural son of an organist, herself living on the bounty of a physician.

'What ails you, child?' said the lady, making her sit down by her side.

'Madame, I am overcome by the honour you condescend to pay me.'

'Why, child,' replied Madame de Portenduère in her most vinegar accent, 'I know how much your guardian loves you, and I wish to do what is agreeable to him, for he has brought home the prodigal son.'

'But, my dear mother,' said Savinien, for it went to his heart to see Ursule's deep blushes, and the terrible effort by which she repressed her tears, 'even if you were under no obligation to Monsieur Minoret, it seems to me we might be gratified by the pleasure mademoiselle is good enough to do us by accepting your invitation.'

And the young man pressed the doctor's hand with meaning as he added—

'You, Monsieur, wear the order of Saint Michael, the oldest French order, which in itself confers nobility.'

Ursule's great beauty, to which her almost hopeless love had, within the last few days, given the depth of expression which the greatest painters have always stamped on those portraits in which the soul is made strongly visible, had suddenly struck Madame de Portenduère, and led her to suspect some ambitious interest under the doctor's generosity. And the speech to which Savinien had replied was uttered with a pointedness that wounded the old man in what was dearest to him. Still, he could not forbear from smiling as he heard himself addressed as 'Chevalier' by Savinien, and discerned in this audacious exaggeration a lover's fearlessness of the ridiculous.

'The Order of Saint Michael, to obtain which so many follies were committed of old, is fallen, Monsieur le Vicomte,' replied the old Court physician. 'Fallen, like so many other privileges! It is no longer bestowed on any but doctors and poor artists. And so kings have done well to unite it to that of Saint Lazarus, a saint who was, I believe, an unhappy wretch brought back to life by a miracle! Viewed in this light, the Order of Saint Michael and Saint Lazarus to us may be symbolical.'

After this reply, full of irony and dignity, silence reigned, no one caring to break it; and it was becoming uncomfortable, when a knock was heard.

'Here is our good curé,' said the old lady, rising, and leaving Ursule to herself, while she went forward to receive the priest—an honour she had not paid to Ursule or the doctor.

Minoret smiled as he looked from his ward to Savinien. To complain or to take offence at Madame de Portenduère's bad manners was a rock on which a small mind might have run aground; but the old man had too much breeding not to avoid it. He began talking to the

Vicomte of the danger Charles x. was in at that time, after intrusting the direction of his policy to the Prince de Polignac. When a long enough time had elapsed to obviate any appearance of retaliation on the old lady by speaking of business matters, he handed to her, almost jestingly, the documents of the prosecution and the receipted bills which proved the accounts drawn up by the lawyer.

'My son acknowledges them?' she asked with a glance at Savinien, who bowed in reply. 'Well, then, they can be handed to Dionis,' and she pushed away the papers, treating the affair with the contempt due in her eyes to money matters.

To look down on wealth was, in Madame de Portenduère's opinion, to enhance nobility, and leave the middle class without a foot to stand on.

A few minutes later Goupil called on behalf of his master, to ask for the accounts as between Savinien and Monsieur Minoret.

'And what for?' asked the old lady.

'To serve as a basis for the mortgage deed; there is no direct payment of money,' replied the clerk, looking insolently about him.

Ursule and Savinien, who looked in this odious person's face for the first time, felt such a sensation as is produced by a toad, aggravated by a sense of ill omen. They both had that indefinable and vague anticipation of the future which has no name in speech, but which might be accounted for by an impulse of that inner self of which the Swedenborgian had spoken to Doctor Minoret. A conviction that this venomous Goupil would be fatal to them made Ursule quake; but she got over her agitation as she perceived with unspeakable joy that Savinien shared her feelings.

'Monsieur Dionis' clerk is not a handsome man,' said Savinien, when Goupil had shut the door.

'What can it matter whether people of that class are ugly or handsome?' said Madame de Portenduère.

'I have no objection to his ugliness,' said the curé, 'but only to his malignity, which is unbounded, and he adds to it by villainy.'

In spite of his wish to be amiable, the doctor grew cold and dignified, the lovers were uncomfortable. But for the simple good humour of the Abbé Chaperon, whose gentle cheerfulness made the dinner lively, the position of the doctor and his ward would have been almost intolerable.

At dessert, seeing Ursule turn pale, he said to her, 'If you do not feel well, my child, there is only the street to cross.'

'What ails you, my dear?' said the old lady to the girl.

'Unfortunately, Madame,' said the doctor severely, 'her soul feels chilled, accustomed as she is to see nothing but smiles.'

'A bad education, Monsieur,' said Madame de Portenduère. 'Do not you think so, Monsieur le Curé?'

'Yes, Madame,' Minoret put in, with a glance at the curé, who could not say a word. 'I have, I see, made life impossible to this seraphic nature if she were to be cast on the world; but before I die, I will find means to protect her from coldness, indifference, and hatred——'

'Godfather! I beg of you—that is enough. I feel nothing unpleasant here,' she said, ready to meet Madame de Portenduère's eye rather than lend too much meaning to her words by looking at Savinien.

'Whether Mademoiselle Ursule is uncomfortable I know not, Madame,' said Savinien to his mother, 'but I know that you are torturing me.'

On hearing this speech, wrung from the generous young man by his mother's behaviour, Ursule turned pale; she begged Madame de Portenduère to excuse her, rose, took her guardian's arm, curtseyed, and went out. Then, as soon as she was at home, she rushed into the drawing-room, and sitting down by the piano, hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

'Why will you not leave it to my long experience to guide your feelings, cruel child?' cried the doctor in despair. 'The nobility never think themselves under any obligation towards us of the middle class. In serving them, we do no more than our duty, that is all. Besides, the old lady perceived that Savinien looked at you with pleasure; she is afraid lest he should fall in love with you.'

'At any rate, he is safe!' she said. 'But to try to set down such a man as you are——!'

'Wait till I come back, my child.'

When the doctor returned to Madame de Portenduère's he found Dionis there, and with him Monsieur Bongrand, and Levrault the mayor, the witnesses required by law to give validity to acts drawn up in communes where there is no official above a notary. Minoret led Dionis aside and spoke a word in his ear, after which the notary read the deed of mortgage; Madame de Portenduère pledged all her property until the hundred thousand francs lent by the doctor to the Vicomte should be repaid, with the interest, calculated at five per cent. When reading this clause, the curé looked at Minoret, who answered the Abbé by an approving nod. The good priest went to speak a few words to the lady in a low voice, and she replied quite audibly—

'I do not choose to owe anything to people of that kind.'

'My mother leaves the pleasantest part to me,' said Savinien to the doctor. 'She will pay you all the money, and leave it to me to be grateful.'

'But you will have to find eleven thousand francs the first year,' observed the curé, 'to pay the law costs.'

'Monsieur,' said Minoret to Dionis, 'as Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère are not in a position to pay for the registration, add the costs to the capital sum, and I will pay them.'

Dionis made some calculations, and the whole sum

was fixed at a hundred and seven thousand francs. When all the documents were signed, Minoret pleaded fatigue, and withdrew at the same time as the notary and the witnesses.

'Madame,' said the Abbé, who remained with the Vicomte, 'why affront that excellent Minoret, who has saved you at least twenty-five thousand francs in Paris, and who had the good feeling to leave twenty thousand in your son's hands for his debts of honour?'

'Your Minoret is a sly fox,' said she, taking a pinch of snuff. 'He knows very well what he is about.'

'My mother fancies that he wants to force me to marry his ward by swallowing up our farm, as if a Portenduère and the son of a Kergarouët could be made to marry against his will.'

An hour later Savinien made his appearance at the doctor's, where the heirs had come together, moved by curiosity. The arrival of the young Vicomte produced a great sensation, all the more because in each person it proceeded from a different emotion. Mesdemoiselles Crémière and Massin whispered together, and stared at Ursule, who blushed. The mothers murmured to Désiré that Goupil was very likely in the right as regarded the marriage. The eyes of all were then centred on the doctor, who did not rise to greet the young nobleman, but merely gave him a curt bow, without setting down his dice-box, for he was playing backgammon with Monsieur Bongrand. The doctor's cold manner surprised them all.

'Ursule, my dear,' he said, 'give us a little music.'

The young girl was only too happy to have some occupation; and on seeing her hurry to the piano and turn over the green-bound volumes, the expectant heirs resigned themselves with expressions of pleasure to the torment and silence about to be inflicted on them, so eager were they to detect what was going on between their uncle and the Portenduères.

It happens not unfrequently that a piece, poor enough in itself, but played by a young girl under the stress of deep feeling, may produce more impression than a grand overture pompously given by a fine orchestra. In all music there lies, besides the idea of the composer, the soul of the performer, who, by a privilege peculiar to this art alone, can lend purpose and poetry to phrases of no great intrinsic value. Chopin, in our day, proves the truth of this fact on the piano, a thankless instrument, as Paganini had already done on the violin. This great genius is not so much a musician as a soul, which becomes incarnate, and which could express itself in any form of music, even in simple chords.

Ursule, by her exquisite and perilous organisation, belonged to this school of rare genius; but old Schmucke, the master who came to her every Saturday, and who, during her stay in Paris, had gone to her every day, had developed his pupil's gifts to the utmost perfection. 'Rousseau's Dream,' the piece Ursule now selected, one of Hérold's youthful compositions, is not lacking in a certain fulness which the player can bring out; Ursule gave it a variety of agitated feeling which justified the title of *Caprice*, which the fragment bears. By her playing, at once mellifluous and dreamy, her soul spoke to the soul of the young man, and wrapped him, as it were, in a cloud of almost visible thoughts. He, seated at the end of the piano, his elbow resting on the top, and his head supported by his left hand, gazed in admiration at Ursule, whose eyes, fixed on the wainscot beyond, seemed to be questioning some mystic world. A man might have fallen desperately in love for less.

True feelings have a magnetic power, and Ursule intended to reveal her soul to some extent, as a coquette dresses herself to attract. Savinien was admitted to that beautiful realm, carried away by her heart, which, in order to express itself, borrowed the power of the only art which speaks to the mind through the mind, without the

aid of words, of colour, or of form. Candour has the same power over men as childhood has, the same charms and irresistible attractions; and Ursule had never been more candid than at this moment, when she was waking to a new life.

The curé came to snatch the young man from his dreams by asking him to take the fourth hand at whist. Ursule went on playing; the heirs left, with the exception of Désiré, who remained to investigate the intentions of his uncle, of the Vicomte, and of Ursule.

'You have as much talent as feeling, Mademoiselle,' said Savinien, when the young girl closed the piano, and came to sit down by her godfather. 'Who is your master?'

'A German who lives quite close to the Rue Dauphine, on the Quai-Conti,' said the doctor. 'If he had not been giving Ursule a lesson every day during our stay in Paris, he would have been here this morning.'

'He is not only a great musician,' said Ursule, 'but a man of the most adorable simplicity.'

'Such lessons must cost very dear!' cried Désiré.

The players exchanged ironical glances. When the game was ended, the doctor, who had been thoughtful all the evening, turned to Savinien with the expression of a man grieved to fulfil a painful duty.

'Monsieur,' he said, 'I am much gratified by the feeling which has prompted you to call on me so immediately; but your mother ascribes to me a double purpose of an ignoble kind, and I should give her the right to do so if I did not beg of you to come here no more, in spite of the honour your visits do me, and the pleasure I should take in cultivating your society. My honour and my peace of mind require that we should give up all neighbourly intercourse. Pray tell your mother that if I do not request her to honour us—my ward and myself—by dining with us next Sunday, it is because I am perfectly certain that on that day she would be indisposed.'

The old man offered his hand to the Vicomte, who pressed it respectfully, and merely said, 'You are right, Monsieur.'

He went away, not without bowing to Ursule with an expression of regret rather than of disappointment. Désiré left the room at the same moment, but he could not speak a word with him, for Savinien rushed home.

For two days the coolness between the Portenduères and the doctor was the sole subject of conversation among the heritors, who did justice to the acumen of Dionis, and believed that the inheritance was safe. And thus, in an age when ranks are levelled, when the mania for equality puts all individuals on the same footing, and threatens every institution, even military discipline—the last entrenchment of power in France; when, consequently, passion finds no obstacles to be overcome but personal antipathies or inequality of fortune, the obstinacy of an old woman and the dignity of Doctor Minoret had raised between these two lovers barriers which, as usual, were fated to strengthen rather than to destroy their love. To an impassioned man a woman is worth just what she costs him; now Savinien, foreseeing a struggle, efforts, and suspense, which already made the young girl precious to him, was determined to win her. Perhaps our feelings obey the law of nature as to the duration of all her creations—a long life has a long childhood.

Next morning, on waking, Ursule and Savinien had the same idea. This community of feeling would give birth to love if it were not the most delightful proof of its existence. When the young girl opened her curtains a little way, so as to give her eyes exactly space enough to look across to Savinien's room, she saw her lover's face above the window-fastening opposite. When we remember the immense service done to lovers by windows, it seems quite natural that they should be taxed. After thus protesting against her godfather's hard-heartedness, Ursule let the curtains fall to again, and opened the

window to close the venetians, through which she could see without being seen. She went up to her room at least seven or eight times in the course of the day, and always saw the young Vicomte writing, tearing up papers, and writing again—to her, no doubt!

Next morning, when La Bougival woke Ursule, she handed her the following letter:—

'To Mademoiselle Ursule.

'Mademoiselle,—I am under no misapprehension as to the suspicion of which a young man must be the object when he has placed himself in the position from which your guardian rescued me. I henceforth must offer better guarantees than another man; hence, Mademoiselle, it is with the greatest humility that I throw myself at your feet to avow my love. This declaration is not prompted by passion; it is based on a certainty which will last my life through. A mad passion for my young aunt Madame de Kergarouët brought me to imprisonment; will you not regard as a mark of the sincerest love the complete effacement of every memory, the substitution for that image in my heart of your own? From the moment when I saw you asleep, and so lovely in your childlike slumbers, at Bouron, you have filled my soul as a queen holds possession of her realm. I will have no wife but you. You have every perfection I can look for in the woman who is to bear my name. The education you have received, and the dignity of your soul, qualify you for the highest position. But I am too diffident of myself to attempt to paint you to yourself; I can only love you. After hearing you play last night, I remembered these lines, which seem to have been written on you:—

'"Made to attract the heart and charm the eye, at once gentle and intellectual, witty and reasonable, as polished as though she had spent her life at courts, as simple as

the recluse who has never seen the world, the fire of her soul is tempered in her eyes by divine modesty."'

'I have felt the value of the beautiful soul which reveals itself in you by the smallest things. This is what gives me the courage to ask you—if as yet you love no one—to allow me to prove to you, by my care and my conduct, that I am worthy of you. My life depends on it; you cannot doubt that all my powers shall be employed not merely to please you, but yet more to merit your esteem, which will to me outweigh that of all the rest of the world. In this hope, Ursule, if you will permit me so to name you in my heart as one I worship, Nemours will be my paradise, and the most difficult undertakings will only bring me joys which I shall lay at your feet, as we lay all at the throne of God. Tell me, then, that I may call myself YOUR SAVINIEN.

Ursule kissed this letter; then, after reading it again, and clasping it with rapturous gestures, she dressed to go and show it to her godfather.

'Gracious Heaven! I was on the point of going without saying my prayers!' she exclaimed, turning back and kneeling down on her *prie-Dieu.*

A few minutes later she went down to the garden, where she found her guardian, to whom she gave Savinien's letter to read. They sat down together on a bench under the clump of creepers facing the Chinese pavilion. Ursule waited for the old man to speak, and he sat meditating much too long a time for an impatient girl. Finally, the outcome of their secret conference was the following letter, which the doctor had no doubt dictated in part:—

'MONSIEUR,—I cannot fail to be much honoured by the letter in which you offer me your hand; but at my age, and in accordance with the rules I have been brought up in, I had to lay it before my guardian, who constitutes

my whole family, and whom I love as both a father and a friend. These, then, are the painful objections he has raised, and which must serve as my reply.

'I, Monsieur le Vicomte, am but a poor girl, whose future fortune depends entirely not only on my godfather's goodwill, but also on the doubtful issue of the measures he can take to evade the ill-will towards me of his next of kin. Though I am the legitimate child of Joseph Mirouët, bandmaster to the 45th infantry regiment, as he was my guardian's illegitimate half-brother, a suit, however unreasonable, may be brought against a young girl, who will then be defenceless. You see, Monsieur, that my slender prospects are not the worst of my misfortunes. I have many reasons for humility. It is for your sake, and not for my own, that I lay before you these considerations, which often weigh but lightly on loving and devoted hearts. But you must take into consideration the fact that if I did not represent them to you, I might be suspected of wishing to induce your affection to overlook obstacles which the world, and, above all, your mother, would think insurmountable. In four months I shall be sixteen. You will perhaps acknowledge that we are, both of us, too young and too inexperienced to struggle with the penury of a life begun on no fortune but what I possess through the kindness of the late Monsieur de Jordy. Besides, my guardian wishes that I should not marry before the age of twenty. Who can tell what fate may have in store for you during these four years, the best of your life? Do not spoil it for the sake of a poor girl.

'Having thus explained to you, Monsieur, the reasons given by my dear guardian, who, far from opposing my happiness, desires to contribute to it with all his power, and who hopes to see his protection—which will soon be but feeble—replaced by an affection equal to his own, it only remains for me to say how deeply I am touched by your offer and the warm compliments you have added to

it. The prudence which dictates this answer is that of an old man who knows life well; but the gratitude I must express is that of a young girl whose soul no other emotion has as yet entered.

'I can therefore in all truth sign myself your faithful servant, URSULE MIROUET.'

Savinien did not reply. Was he trying to influence his mother? Had her letter extinguished his love? A thousand such questions, all unanswerable, tortured Ursule, and by reflex action the doctor, too, for he suffered under the slightest agitation that disturbed his dear child. Ursule often went up to her room and looked across at Savinien, whom she could see seated at his table, deep in thought, and often turning to glance at her windows. It was not till the end of the week that she received this letter from Savinien, whose delay was explained by an increase of his love:—

'To Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët.

'DEAR URSULE,—There is something of the Breton in me, and when once I have made up my mind, nothing can make me alter it. Your guardian—whom may God long preserve!—is perfectly right. But am I to blame, then, for loving you? And all I ask is to know whether you love me. Tell me, if only by a sign, and then these four years will indeed be the best of my life!

'A friend of mine has conveyed to my uncle, Admiral de Kergarouët, a letter, in which I asked his influence to get me into the navy. The kind old man, touched by my mishaps, has answered that the King's nomination would be contrary to rule if I wished to take rank. However, after three months of study at Toulon, the minister can place me in a ship as foreman of the steerage; then, after a cruise against Algiers, with whom we are at war, I can pass an examination and become a naval cadet. If I should distinguish myself in the expedition

to be sent against Algiers, I should certainly be made sub-lieutenant; but how soon? No one can tell. But, at any rate, the regulations will be made as elastic as possible to reinstate the name of Portenduère on the navy-list.

'I can win you only through your guardian, I see, and your respect for him makes you the dearer to my heart. So, before replying, I will seek an interview with him; on his answer my whole future must depend. Come what may, believe me that, rich or poor, the daughter of a bandmaster or of a king, you are to me her whom the voice of my heart has chosen.

'Dear Ursule, we live at a time when prejudice, which of old would have parted us, has no longer power enough to hinder our marriage. All the feelings of my heart are yours, and to your uncle I will give such guarantees as may assure him of your happiness. He does not know that I have loved you more in a few minutes than he has loved you in fifteen years!—Till this evening.'

'See here, godfather!' said Ursule, holding out the letter with an impulse of pride.

'Ah! my child,' cried the doctor, after reading the letter, 'I am more glad than you are. By this determination the Vicomte has made up for all his misdeeds.'

After dinner, Savinien called upon the doctor, who was just then walking with Ursule by the balustrade of the river-terrace. The Vicomte had received his clothes from Paris, and the lover had not omitted to enhance his personal advantages by dressing as carefully, as elegantly, as though it were to charm the handsome and haughty Comtesse de Kergarouët. On seeing him advance from the outside steps, the poor child clung to her uncle's arm exactly as if she were trying to save herself from falling into an abyss, and the doctor heard the deep, hollow throbbing of her heart; it made him shudder.

'Leave us, my child,' he said to his ward, who went

to sit down on the steps of the pavilion after suffering Savinien to take her hand and kiss it respectfully.

'Monsieur, will you give that dear creature to a ship's captain?' said the young Vicomte to the doctor in a low voice.

'No,' said Minoret with a smile, 'we might have too long to wait; but—to a ship's lieutenant.'

Tears of joy stood in the young man's eyes, and he grasped the old man's hand very warmly.

'Then I shall go,' he said, 'to study, and try to learn in six months what the pupils of the naval college learn in six years.'

'Go?' cried Ursule, flying towards them from the steps.

'Yes, Mademoiselle, to deserve you. So, the more haste I put into it, the more affection I shall show for you.'

'To-day is the 3rd October,' said she, looking at him with infinite tenderness. 'Start after the 19th.'

'Yes,' said the old man; 'we will keep the feast of Saint-Savinien.'

'Then, good-bye,' exclaimed the youth. 'I must spend this week in Paris to take the preliminary steps, make my preparations, and buy the books and the mathematical instruments I need; to make my way, too, in the minister's good graces, and win the most favourable conditions possible.'

Ursule and her godfather went with Savinien to the gate. After seeing him go into his mother's house, they saw him come out again, followed by Tiennette, carrying a little portmanteau.

'Why, if you are rich, do you compel him to serve in the navy?' said Ursule to the doctor.

'I believe you will soon think it was I who contracted his debts!' said her uncle, smiling. 'I do not compel him.—But, my darling, a uniform and the Cross of the Legion of Honour won in battle will wipe out many a

smirch. In four years he may rise to command a ship, and that is all I ask of him.'

'But he may be killed,' she said, showing the doctor a white face.

'Lovers, like drunkards, have a Providence of their own,' replied the doctor lightly.

The poor child, unknown to her godfather, cut off at night enough of her beautiful long fair hair to make a chain; then, two days later, she persuaded her music-master, old Schmucke, to promise that he would see that the hair was not changed, and that the chain should be finished for the following Sunday.

On Savinien's return, he informed the doctor and his ward that he had signed his papers; he was to be at Brest by the 25th. As the doctor invited him to dinner on the 18th, he spent almost the whole of two days at his house; and in spite of the most prudent warnings, the lovers could not hinder themselves from betraying their mutual understanding to the curé, the Justice, the town doctor, and La Bougival.

'Children,' said the old man, 'you are risking your happiness by not keeping the secret to yourselves.'

At last, on the fête day, after mass, during which they had exchanged glances, Savinien, watched for by Ursule, crossed the street and came into the little garden, where they found themselves almost alone. To indulge them, the good man sat reading his paper in the Chinese pavilion.

'Dear Ursule,' said Savinien, 'will you give me a greater boon than my mother could if she were to give me life a second time?'

'I know what you would ask me,' said Ursule, interrupting him. 'Here, this is my answer,' she added, as she took out of the pocket of her apron the chain made of her hair, and gave it him with a nervous trembling that betrayed her excessive joy. 'Wear this for my sake,' she said. 'May my gift avert from you every peril by reminding you that my life is one with yours!'

'Ah, the little rogue!' she is giving him a chain of her hair,' said the doctor to himself. 'How could she do it? Cut her beautiful fair hair!—Why, she would give him my blood!'

'And will you think it very odious of me if I ask you, before we part, to give me your formal promise that you will never have any husband but me?' said Savinien, kissing the chain, and looking at Ursule, while he could not restrain one tear.

'If I have not told you so too plainly already—I who went to gaze at the walls of a prison when you were inside,' she answered with a deep blush, 'I repeat it now, Savinien. I shall never love any one but you, and will never marry any one else.'

Seeing that Ursule was half hidden among the creepers, the young man could not resist the pleasure of clasping her to his heart and kissing her forehead; but she gave a low scream, and dropped on to the bench; and when Savinien sat down by her, imploring her pardon, he saw the doctor standing in front of them.

'My good fellow,' said he, 'Ursule is a sensitive plant; a hard word might kill her. For her sake you should moderate the expression of your love. Ah! if you had loved her for fifteen years, you would have taken her word,' he added, in revenge for the last words of Savinien's letter.

Two days later Savinien left. It spite of the letters he wrote regularly to Ursule, she was a victim to a malady that had no evident cause. Like a fine fruit attacked by a maggot, one thought was eating her heart out. She lost her appetite and her bright colour. When her godfather first asked her what she was feeling —

'I want to see the sea,' she said.

'It is difficult to take you to a seaport in the month of December?' said the old man.

'Then shall I go?' said she.

If the wind was high, Ursule was in agonies, believing, in spite of the learned observations of her godfather, the curé, and the Justice, that Savinien was warring with a hurricane. The Justice made her happy for a few days with a print representing a naval cadet in his uniform. She read the newspapers, believing that they would give her news of the cruise in which Savinien was engaged. She devoured the seafaring novels of Cooper, and learned the meaning of sea words. These proofs of a fixed idea, so often affected by other women, were so perfectly natural in Ursule that she foresaw in a dream every letter from Savinien, and never failed to predict their arrival by relating the premonitory dream.

'Now,' said she to the doctor, on the fourth occasion when this had happened without the doctor and the curé being at all surprised; 'now, I am easy; however far away Savinien may be, if he were wounded, I should feel it at the same moment.'

The old physician sat plunged in deep meditation, which, to judge from the expression of his face, the Justice and the curé thought must be sorrowful.

'What is wrong?' they asked him, when Ursule had left them together.

'Will she live?' replied the old doctor. 'Can so frail and tender a flower withstand the anguish of her heart?'

Meanwhile the 'little dreamer,' as the curé called her, worked indefatigably; she understood the importance to a woman of the world of extensive information; and when she was not studying singing, harmony, or composition, she spent her time in reading the books chosen for her in her godfather's extensive library.

While leading this busy life she suffered much, but she did not complain. Sometimes she would sit for hours gazing at Savinien's window opposite. On Sunday, as she came from church, she followed Madame de Portenduère, watching her tenderly, for in spite of her

sternness she loved her as being Savinien's mother. Her piety was doubled ; she went to mass every morning, for she firmly believed that her dreams were a special grace from God.

Alarmed by the ravages of this nostalgia of love, on Ursule's birthday her godfather promised to take her to Toulon to see the departure of the fleet for Algiers without announcing their purpose to Savinien, who was sailing with it. The Justice and the curé kept the secret of the doctor's intentions with regard to this journey, which seemed to be undertaken for the benefit of Ursule's health, and which puzzled the heirs very greatly.

After having seen Savinien once more in his uniform, and after going on board the fine flagship of the admiral, to whom the minister had especially recommended young Portenduère, Ursule, at her friend's desire, went to inhale the soft air of Nice, and travelled along the Mediterranean coast as far as Genoa, where she had news of the arrival of the fleet before Algiers and a good report of the landing. The doctor would gladly have continued the journey across Italy, as much to divert Ursule's mind as to complete her education and enlarge her ideas by comparing manners and scenery, and by the delights of a land where the greatest works of art are to be seen, and where so many civilisations have left glorious traces ; but the news of the opposition to the throne shown by the electors of the famous Chamber of 1830 called him back to France, whither he brought his ward home in a blooming state of health, and happy in the possession of a small model of the ship on which Savinien was serving.

The elections of 1830 gave cohesion to the Minoret heirs ; for, by the advice of Goupil and of Désiré Minoret, they formed a committee at Nemours, by whose efforts the Liberal candidate was returned for Fontainebleau. Massin exerted immense influence over the country voters. Five of the postmaster's farmers

also had votes. Dionis represented more than eleven votes. By meeting at the notary's, Crémière, Massin, the postmaster, and their adherents got into a habit of assembling there. On the doctor's return, Dionis' room had thus become their camping ground.

The Justice and the Mayor, who then combined to resist the Liberals of Nemours, were beaten by the Opposition in spite of the efforts of the gentry in the neighbourhood, and their defeat bound them very closely together. When Bongrand and the Abbé Chaperon told the doctor of the result of this antagonism, which had divided Nemours, for the first time, into two parties, and had given importance to his next-of-kin, Charles x. was actually leaving Rambouillet for Cherbourg. Désiré Minoret, whose opinions were those of the Paris bar, had invited fifteen of his friends, with Goupil at their head, to come from Nemours; the postmaster gave them horses to hurry to Paris, where they joined Désiré on the night of the 28th of July. Désiré and Goupil led this little troop to assist in the seizure of the Hôtel de Ville.

Désiré Minoret received the ribbon of the Legion of Honour, and was appointed Deputy to the Public Prosecutor at Fontainebleau. Goupil won the Cross of July. Dionis was elected Mayor of Nemours, in the place of the Sieur Levrault, and the town council was then composed of Minoret-Levrault, deputy-mayor, of Massin, Crémière, and all the followers of Dionis.

Bongrand only kept his appointment as Justice by the influence of his son, who was made Public Prosecutor at Melun, his marriage with Mademoiselle Levrault seeming at that time probable.

When three per cents. were down to forty-five, the doctor set out to post to Paris, and invested five hundred and forty thousand francs in certificates to the bearer. The rest of his fortune, amounting to about two hundred and seventy thousand francs, placed likewise in the funds,

yielded nominally fifteen thousand francs a year. He invested in the same way the money left to Ursule by the old professor, as well as the eight thousand francs of nine years accumulated interest, which, with the help of a small addition on his part to make it up to a round sum, brought in fourteen hundred francs a year to his ward. In obedience to her master's advice, La Bougival also would get three hundred and fifty francs a year by investing in the same way her five thousand and odd francs of savings. These prudent steps, as planned by the doctor and his friend Bongrand, were taken in perfect secrecy under favour of the political excitement. When calm was more or less restored, the doctor purchased a little house adjoining his own, and pulled it down, as well as the wall of his courtyard, to construct on the ground a coach-house and stables. That he should spend capital bearing a thousand francs interest seemed to all the Minoret heirs pure insanity. This supposed craziness was the beginning of a new era in the doctor's life; at a moment when horses and carriages were being almost given away, he brought from Paris three fine horses and a chariot.

The first time the old man came to mass in a carriage, on a rainy day at the beginning of November 1830, and got out to give his hand to Ursule, all the townsfolk rushed to the Square, as much to see the doctor's carriage and cross-question the coachman, as to comment on his ward, to whose excessive ambition Massin, Crémière, and the postmaster ascribed their uncle's follies.

'A chariot! heh, Massin?' cried Goupil. 'Your inheritance promises well, hein!'

'You asked good wages, I suppose, Cabirolle?' said the postmaster to the son of one of his guards, who took charge of the horses, 'for it is to be hoped that you will not see many horse-shoes worn through in the service of a man of eighty. How much did those horses cost?'

'Four thousand francs. The chariot, though second-

hand, cost him two thousand; but it is a good one. The wheels have the patent axle-box.'

'What do you call it, Cabirolle?' asked Madame Crémière.

'He says they have latent axle-hocks,' replied Goupil. 'It is an English notion; they invented those wheels. Look how neat it is; all covered up, nothing to be seen, nothing to catch, no ugly square iron peg projecting beyond the axle.'

'What does axer-hock mean, then?' asked Madame Crémière very innocently.

'Surely,' said Goupil, 'you need hardly axe that.'

'Ah! I understand,' said she.

'No, no; you are a good soul,' said Goupil. 'It is a shame to take you in. The real word is patent axe-locks, because you must axe how it is fastened.'

'That's it, Madame,' said Cabirolle, who was himself taken in by Goupil's explanation, the clerk spoke with such gravity.

'It is a handsome carriage, at any rate,' said Crémière, 'and he must be rich to set up in such style.'

'She is going ahead, that little girl!' remarked Goupil. 'But she is right; she is showing you how to enjoy life. Why have not you fine horses and chariots—you, Father Minoret? Will you submit to be humiliated? In your place I would have a coach like a prince's.'

'I say, Cabirolle,' said Massin, 'is it the little girl who puts my uncle up to all this luxury?'

'I don't know,' replied Cabirolle, 'but she is, so to speak, mistress of the whole place. And now master after master comes from Paris. She is to learn to paint, they say.'

'I will take the opportunity of having my likeness done,' said Madame Crémière. Country folks still speak of having a likeness done instead of a portrait taken.

'But the old German is not dismissed,' said Madame Massin.

'No, he is here to-day,' replied Cabirolle.

'There is safety in numbers,' observed Madame Crémière, making everybody laugh.

'You need no longer count on the inheritance,' cried Goupil. 'Ursule is nearly seventeen; she is prettier than ever; travelling forms the youthful mind, and she knows the length of your uncle's foot. The coach brings her five or six parcels a week, and dressmakers and milliners are always coming to try her gowns and things. My mistress is furious, I can tell you. Just wait till Ursule comes out, and look at her little neckerchief—a real Indian square, that must have cost six hundred francs.'

If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst, it could not have produced a greater effect on the group of inheritors than this speech from Goupil, who rubbed his hands.

The doctor's old green drawing-room was redecorated by an upholsterer from Paris. Judged by the prodigality of his outlay, the doctor was accused first of having concealed the amount of his fortune and of having sixty thousand francs a year, and then of spending his capital to humour Ursule. He was regarded alternately as a millionaire and a spendthrift. 'He is an old fool!' summed up the opinion of the neighbours. The misguided verdict of the little town had this advantage: it deceived the next-of-kin, who never suspected Savinien's love for Ursule, which was the real cause of the doctor's expenditure, for he was enchanted to accustom his goddaughter to play her part as a Vicomtesse; and having an income now of fifty thousand francs, he indulged himself in the pleasure of beautifying his idol.

In the month of February 1832, on the day when Ursule was seventeen, as she rose in the morning she saw Savinien at his window in his sub-lieutenant's uniform.

'How is it that I knew nothing about it?' she asked herself.

After the taking of Algiers, where Savinien had distinguished himself by a deed of valour that had won him the Cross, the corvette on which he sailed having remained at sea for many months, he had been quite unable to send a letter to the doctor, and he did not choose to retire from the service without consulting him. The new Government, wishing to keep so illustrious a name on the navy list, had taken advantage of the general scramble of July to promote Savinien. Having obtained a fortnight's leave, the young lieutenant had come by mail from Toulon in time for Ursule's birthday, and to ask the doctor's advice at the same time.

'He is come!' cried the girl, rushing into her godfather's room.

'That is well,' he replied. 'I can guess his reason for quitting the service; he can now remain at Nemours.'

'This is my birthday treat! It is all in those words!' she exclaimed, embracing the doctor.

In reply to a signal she made him, Savinien came across at once. She wanted to admire him; he seemed to her changed for the better. In fact, military discipline gives to a man's gestures, gait, and demeanour a mixture of gravity and decision, a certain rectitude, which enables the most superficial observer to recognise a soldier under a civilian's coat; nothing can more clearly prove that man is made to command. Ursule loved Savinien all the more for it, and felt a child's delight in walking arm in arm with him in the little garden, while she made him tell her the part he had played 'in his capacity of naval cadet' in the siege of Algiers. Evidently it was Savinien who had taken Algiers. She saw everything red, she declared, when she looked at Savinien's decoration. The doctor, who, while dressing in his room, watched the pair, presently joined them. Then, without telling the Vicomte everything, he explained to him that in the

event of Madame de Portenduère's consenting to his marriage with Ursule, his goddaughter's fortune was such as to make his pay superfluous in any rank he might be promoted to.

'Alas!' said Savinien, 'it will take a long time to overcome my mother's opposition. Before I left, when she had the alternative of keeping me near her if she would agree to my marrying Ursule, or of seeing me only at long intervals, and knowing that I was exposed to the risks of my profession, she let me go——'

'But, Savinien, we shall be together,' said Ursule, taking his hand and shaking it with a kind of irritation.

That they should see each other and never part was to her the sum-total of love; she saw nothing beyond; and her pretty impatience, and the petulance of her tone, expressed such perfect innocence that the doctor and Savinien were touched.

Savinien sent in his letter of resignation, and Ursule's birthday was crowned with joy by her lover's presence.

A few months later, by the beginning of May, Doctor Minoret's home life had settled into calm regularity again, but with another constant visitor. The young Vicomte's assiduity was at once interpreted as that of a future bridegroom; all the more so since, whether at mass or out walking, his manner and Ursule's plainly betrayed the mutual understanding of their hearts. Dionis remarked to the heirs that the old man never claimed interest from Madame de Portenduère, who already owed it for three years.

'She will be forced to give in, to consent to her son's marrying beneath him,' said the notary. 'If such a misfortune should happen, it is probable that the larger part of your uncle's fortune will prove, as Basile says, an irresistible argument.

When the expectant heirs understood that the old man's preference for Ursule was too great for him not to secure her happiness at their expense, their wrath became

as cunning as it was deep. Every evening since the revolution of July had seen them meet at Dionis' house, and there they cursed the lovers; and the evening hardly ever ended without their having tried in vain to hit on some way of thwarting the old man. Zélie, who had, no doubt, like the doctor, taken advantage of the fall in the funds to invest her enormous savings, was the most furious against the orphan and the Portenduères. One evening, when Goupil—who, however, as a rule, took care not to spend his evenings too dully—had come in to pick up some information as to the affairs of the town, which were under discussion, Zélie had a recrudescence of hatred. She had that morning seen the doctor, with Ursule and Savinien, returning from a drive in the neighbourhood, with an appearance of intimacy that told all.

'I would give thirty thousand francs, gladly, if only God would take our uncle to himself before that Portenduère and that little minx could be married,' said she.

Goupil walked home with Monsieur and Madame Minoret; and when they were in the middle of their vast courtyard, he said, looking about him to make sure that they were alone—

'Will you give me money enough to buy Dionis out of his business, and I will see that the marriage of Monsieur de Portenduère is broken off?'

'How?' asked the colossus.

'Do you think I am fool enough to tell you my plan?' replied the clerk.

'Well, my boy, make them quarrel, and we will see,' said Zélie.

'I am not going to plunge into such a job on the strength of "we will see." The young gentleman is hot-headed, and might kill me; and I must be well rough-shod, and his match with the rapier and pistol. Set me up in life, and I will keep my word.'

'Stop the marriage, and I will set you up,' retorted the postmaster.

'For nine months now you have been debating whether you will lend me a wretched fifteen thousand francs to buy Lecœur's business—the usher's—and you expect me to take your word? Get along! You will lose your uncle's fortune; and serve you right!'

'If it were only a matter of fifteen thousand francs and Lecœur's business, I don't say no,' replied Zélie; 'but to be security for fifty thousand crowns——!'

'But I will repay you,' said Goupil, with a fascinating leer at Zélie, which the postmistress met with an imperious stare.

It was like vitriol on steel.

'We will wait,' said Zélie.

'Possessed by the genius of evil!' thought Goupil. 'If ever I get hold of these two,' said he to himself as he went away, 'I will squeeze them like lemons!'

Savinien, while cultivating the society of the doctor, the Justice, and the curé, showed them the excellence of his character. The young man's love for Ursule, so absolutely disinterested, so constant, appealed so strongly to the three friends that they no longer separated the two young people in their thoughts. Before long the monotony of this patriarchal life, and the confidence the lovers felt in their future, had given their affection a fraternal aspect. The doctor often left Savinien and Ursule together. He had rightly estimated the admirable young man who kissed Ursule's hand when he entered, and would never have asked such a privilege when alone with her, so deep was his respect for the innocence and candour of the child; and the extreme sensitiveness which she had often betrayed had taught him that a hard word, a cold look, or alternations of gentleness and roughness might kill her. The utmost boldness of the lovers always showed itself in the presence of the old men in the evening.

Two years, full of secret delight, thus slipped away,

unbroken by any event but the useless efforts of the young man to obtain his mother's consent to his marriage with Ursule. He would sometimes talk for the whole morning, his mother listening to his entreaties and arguments, but making no reply but by the obstinate silence of a Bretonne or by curt refusals.

At nineteen, Ursule, elegant, well educated, and an excellent musician, had nothing more to learn; she was perfection. And she had a reputation for beauty, grace, and information which reached far and wide. One day the doctor had to refuse the proposals of the Marquise d'Aiglemont, who would have married her to her eldest son. Six months later, in spite of the absolute silence preserved by Ursule, by her guardian, and by Madame d'Aiglemont, Savinien heard by chance of this affair. Touched by such delicate conduct, he spoke of it as an argument to overcome his mother's aversion, but she would only say—

'If the d'Aiglemonts choose to marry beneath them, is that any reason that we should?'

In the month of December 1834 the worthy and pious old man was visibly breaking. As they saw him come out of church, his face pinched and yellow, his eyes dim, all the town began to speak of his approaching end, for the good man was now eighty-eight years of age.

'Now you will know where you stand,' they said to the heirs.

The doctor's death had, in fact, the fascination of a problem. But the old man did not think that he was ill; he had illusions on the subject, and neither poor Ursule, nor Savinien, nor Monsieur Bongrand, nor the curé, could, in decency, explain his danger to him; the town doctor of Nemours, who came to see him every evening, dared prescribe nothing more. Old Minoret felt no pain; he was gently burning out. In him the intellect remained clear, strong, and exact. In old men of this

stamp the soul is potent over the body, and gives it strength to die standing. To postpone the fatal hour, the curé granted his parishioner a dispensation from attending mass at church, and allowed him to read prayers at home, for the doctor carefully fulfilled all his religious duties; the nearer he was to the grave, the more he loved God.

At the New Year, Ursule persuaded him to sell his carriage and horses, and dismiss Cabirolle. The Justice, whose uneasiness as to Ursule's prospects was far from being lulled by the old man's half-confidences, touched on the delicate question of his fortune, explaining to him one evening the necessity for making Ursule independent by law, by declaring her to be of age. She would then be competent to receive an account of his guardianship and possess property; this would enable him to leave her money. In spite of this opening, the old man, though he had formerly consulted the Justice, did not confide to him what his purpose was with regard to Ursule; however, he formally declared her of age. The more eager the lawyer showed himself to know what steps his old friend had taken to provide for Ursule, the more suspicious the doctor became. In short, Minoret was actually afraid to confide to the Justice the secret of the thirty-six thousand francs in bonds payable to the bearer.

'Why,' said Bongrand, 'set chance against you?'

'Of two chances,' replied the doctor, 'one must avoid the most risky.

Bongrand carried through the matter of the 'emancipation' so briskly that Mademoiselle Mirouët was legally independent on the day when she was twenty. This anniversary was destined to be the last festival kept by the old doctor, who, feeling no doubt some presentiment of his approaching end, celebrated the occasion magnificently by giving a little ball, to which he invited the young people of the four families of Dionis, Crémière, Minoret, and Massin. Savinien, Bongrand, the curé and his two assistant priests, the town doctor, Mesdames

Zélie Minoret, Massin, and Crémière, with old Schmucke, were his guests at a grand dinner before the dance.

'I feel that I have not long to stay,' said the old man to the notary towards the end of the evening. 'I beg you to come to-morrow to draw up the report and accounts I have to hand over to Ursule as her guardian, so as to avoid all complications after my death. Thank God, I have not robbed my heirs of a sou, and have spent nothing but my income. Messieurs Crémière, Massin, and my nephew Minoret are the family trustees appointed for Ursule, and they must be present at the auditing of the account.'

These words, overheard by Massin, and repeated in the ballroom, filled the three families with joy, after they had spent three years in constant alternations of feeling, believing themselves sometimes rich, and sometimes disinherited.

'It is a lamp flying out,' said Madame Crémière. (She meant dying out.)

When, at about two in the morning, no one remained in the room but Savinien, Bongrand, and the Abbé Chaperon, the old doctor said, as he pointed to Ursule, lovely in her ball-dress, having just said good-night to the young Crémière and Massin girls—

'I place her in your hands, my friends. In a few days I shall no longer be here to protect her; stand between her and the world until she is married—I am afraid for her——'

These words made a painful impression. The account drawn up and read a few days later in the presence of a family council proved that Doctor Minoret was indebted to Ursule in the sum of ten thousand six hundred francs, partly as arrears of the shares bearing interest to the amount of fourteen thousand francs, which was accounted for by the investment of Captain de Jordy's legacy, and partly as a small capital of five thousand francs derived from certain gifts made to his ward during the last

fifteen years, on their respective birthdays or name-days.

This authenticated schedule of the account had been advised by the Justice, who feared what might be the result of the old man's death ; and, unhappily, not without reason. The day after the account was passed which made Ursule the mistress of ten thousand six hundred francs in shares and of fourteen hundred francs a year, the doctor had an attack of weakness which compelled him to keep his bed.

In spite of the caution which shrouded the house, a rumour spread in the town that he was dead, and the heirs flew about the streets like the beads of a rosary of which the thread is snapped. Massin, who came to inquire, heard from Ursule herself that the old man was in bed. Unfortunately, the town doctor had prognosticated that when Minoret took to his bed he would die at once. From that moment the whole family stood posted in the street, in the square, or on their front doorsteps, in spite of the cold, absorbed in discussing the long-expected event, and waiting for the moment when the curé should carry to the old man the last sacraments with all the ceremony usual in provincial towns. Hence, when two days later the Abbé Chaperon crossed the High Street, accompanied by his curate and the choir boys, the inheritors followed him to take possession of the house and prevent anything being removed, and to clutch with greedy hands all the imaginary treasure. When the doctor saw, beyond the clerics, all his heirs on their knees, and, far from praying, watching him with gleaming eyes as bright as the twinkling tapers, he could not repress a mischievous smile. The curé looked round, saw them, and read the prayers very slowly. The postmaster was the first to rise from his uncomfortable attitude, his wife followed his example ; Massin, fearful lest Zélie and her husband should lay a hand on some little possession, went after them to the drawing-room,

and there, a few minutes later, all the party had assembled.

'He is too honest a man to steal extreme unction,' said Crémière; 'so we may be easy.'

'Yes; we shall each have about twenty thousand francs a year,' replied Madame Massin.

'I have got it into my head,' said Zélie, 'that for the last three years he has not been investing; he liked to hoard the money——'

'The treasure is in his cellar no doubt?' said Massin to Crémière.

'If we are so lucky as to find anything at all!' observed Minoret-Levrault.

'But after what he said at the ball,' cried Madame Massin, 'there can be no doubt.'

'Whatever there may be,' said Crémière, 'how shall we proceed? Shall we divide? Or put it into the lawyer's hands? Or distribute it in lots? For, after all, we are all of age.'

A discussion, which soon became acrid, arose as to the method of procedure. At the end of half an hour a noise of loud voices, above them all Zélie's shrill tones, rang across the courtyard out into the street.

'He must be dead,' said the curious crowd that had collected there.

The uproar reached the doctor's ears, who could hear these words—

'But there is the house; the house is worth thirty thousand francs!' shouted, or rather bellowed, by Crémière.

'Very well, we will pay for it as much as it is worth,' retorted Zélie sharply.

'Monsieur le Curé,' said the old man to the Abbé, who had remained with his friend after the sacrament, 'let me die in peace. My heirs, like those of Cardinal Ximenes, are capable of pillaging my house before I am dead, and I have no monkey to make restitution. Go and explain that I will have no one in the house.'

The curé and the physician went downstairs and repeated the dying man's orders, adding, in their indignation, some severe words of reproof.

'Madame Bougival,' said the town-doctor, 'shut the gate, and let no one in; a man cannot even die quietly, it would seem.—Make a cup of mustard, to apply plaisters to Monsieur Minoret's feet.'

'Your uncle is not dead; he may live some time yet,' said the Abbé to the family who had brought all their children. He desires perfect silence, and will have no one near him but his ward. What a difference between that young creature's conduct and yours!'

'Old hypocrite!' cried Crémière. 'I will keep guard. It is quite possible that he may plot something against our interests.'

The postmaster had already disappeared into the garden, intending to watch over his uncle with Ursule, and to gain admission into the house as her assistant. He came back on tiptoe without his boots making a sound, for there were carpets in the passages and on the stairs. He thus came close to his uncle's door without being heard. The curé and the physician had left; La Bougival was preparing the mustard plaisters.

'Are we quite alone?' said the old man to his ward.

Ursule stood on tiptoe to look out on the courtyard.

'Yes,' said she, 'Monsieur le Curé shut the gate as he went out.'

'My darling child,' said the dying man, 'my hours, my minutes are numbered. I have not been a doctor for nothing; the mustard plaisters recommended by the apothecary will not carry me through till to-night.—Do not cry, Ursule,' he said, finding himself interrupted by his ward's sobs, 'but listen to me: the point is that you should marry Savinien. As soon as La Bougival comes up with the sinapism, go down to the Chinese pavilion; here is the key; lift up the marble top of the Boule cabinet, and under it you will find a letter addressed to

you; take it, and come up and show it to me, for I shall not die easy unless I know that it is in your hands. When I am dead, do not at once announce the fact; first send for Monsieur de Portenduère, read the letter together, and swear to me in his name and in your own that you will obey my last injunctions. When he has done what I desire, you can announce my death, and then the comedy of the inheritance will begin.—God grant that those monsters may not ill-use you.'

'Yes, godfather.'

The postmaster did not wait for the end of the scene; he took himself off on tiptoe, remembering that the locked door of the pavilion opened from the book-gallery. He himself had been present at the time of a discussion between the architect and the locksmith, who had insisted that if there were to be a way into the house through the window looking out on the river, there must be a lock to the door leading into the book-gallery, the pavilion being a sort of summer-house.

Minoret, his eyes dim with greed, and his blood singing in his ears, unscrewed the lock with a pocket-knife as dexterously as a thief. He went into the pavilion, took the packet of papers without stopping to open it, replaced the lock and restored order, and then went to sit in the dining-room, waiting till La Bougival should be gone upstairs with the mustard plaister, to steal out of the house. This he achieved with all the greater ease because Ursule thought it more necessary to see that the mustard was applied than to obey her godfather's injunctions.

'The letter, the letter,' said the old man in a dying voice. 'Do as I bid you—there is the key. I must see the letter in your hands.'

He spoke with such a wild look, that La Bougival said to Ursule: 'Do as your godfather tells you, at once, or you'll be the death of him.'

She kissed his forehead, took the key, and went down,

but was immediately recalled by a piercing cry from La Bougival, and ran back. The old man glanced at her, saw that her hands were empty, sat up in bed, and tried to speak—and then died with a last fearful gasp, his eyes staring with terror.

The poor child, seeing death for the first time, fell on her knees, and melted into tears. La Bougival closed the old man's eyes, and laid him straight. Then, when she had 'dressed the corpse,' as she said, she went to call Monsieur Savinien; but the heirs, who were prowling at the top of the street, surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, exactly like a flock of crows waiting till a horse is buried, to come and scratch up the earth, and ferret with beak and claws, came running in with the swiftness of birds of prey.

The postmaster, meanwhile, had gone home to master the contents of the mysterious packet. This was what he read:—

'To my dear Ursule Mirouët, daughter of my illegitimate brother-in-law, Joseph Mirouët, and of his wife, Dinah Grollman.

'Nemours, *January* 15, 1830.

'My little Angel,—My fatherly affection, which you have so fully justified, is based not merely on the promise I swore to your poor father to fill his place, but also on your likeness to Ursule Mirouët, my late wife, of whom you constantly remind me by your grace and nature, your artlessness and charm.

'Your being the child of my father-in-law's natural son might lead to any Will in your favour being disputed——'

'The old rascal!' exclaimed the postmaster.

'My adopting you would have given rise to a lawsuit. Again, I have always been averse to the notion of marrying you myself to leave you my fortune, for I might have

lived to a great age and spoilt your future happiness, which is delayed only by the life of Madame de Portenduère. Having regard to these difficulties, and wishing to leave you a fortune adequate to a handsome position——'

'The old wretch, he thought of everything!'

'Without doing any injury to my heirs——'

'Miserable Jesuit! As if we had not a right to his whole fortune!'

'I have put aside for you the sum-total of my savings for the last eighteen years, which I have regularly invested by my lawyer's assistance, in the hope of leaving you as happy as money can make you. Without wealth your education and superior ideas would be a misfortune; besides, you ought to bring a good dowry to the excellent young man who loves you. So look in the middle of the third volume of the *Pandects*, in folio, bound in red morocco, the last volume on the lower shelf above the library cupboard, in the third division on the drawing-room side, and you will find three certificates to bearer of three per cent. consols, each for 12,000 francs.'

'What a depth of villainy!' cried the postmaster. 'Ah, God will not permit me to be thus thwarted!'

'Take them at once, with the small savings left at the moment of my death, which are in the next volume. Remember, my darling child, that you are bound to obey blindly the wish that has been the joy of my whole life, and which will compel me to appeal for help to God if you should disobey me. But to guard against any scruple of your dear conscience, which is, I know, ingenious in tormenting you, you will find with this a Will in due form, bequeathing these certificates to Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère; so, whether you own them, or they are the gift of your lover, they will be legitimately yours.—Your godfather,

'DENIS MINORET.'

Subjoined to this letter, on a sheet of stamped paper, was the following document:—

'This is my Will.

'I, Denis Minoret, Doctor of Medicine, resident at Nemours, sound in mind and body, as the date of this Will proves, dedicate my soul to God, beseeching Him to forgive my long errors in favour of my sincere repentance. Then, having discerned in the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère a sincere affection for me, I bequeath to him thirty-six thousand francs in perpetual consols at three per cent., to be paid out of my estate as a first charge.

'Made and written all by my own hand at Nemours, January 11, 1831.

'Denis Minoret.'

Without a moment's hesitation the postmaster, who, to make sure of being alone, had locked himself into his wife's room, looked about for the tinder-box; he had two warnings from heaven by the extinction of two matches which would not light. The third blazed up. He burnt the letter and the will on the hearth, and took the needless precaution of burying the ashes of the paper and wax in the cinders. Then, licking his lips at the idea of having thirty-six thousand francs unknown to his wife, he flew back to his uncle's house, spurred by one idea—the single fixed idea that his dull brain could master. On seeing his uncle's dwelling invaded by the three families, at last in possession of the stronghold, he quaked lest he should be unable to carry out a project which he gave himself no time to think over, considering only the obstacles in the way.

'What are you doing here?' he said to Massin and Crémière. 'Do you suppose that we are going to leave the house and papers to be pillaged? There are three of us; we cannot encamp on the spot. You, Crémière, go

at once to Dionis and tell him to come and certify the death. Though I am an official, I am not competent to draw up the death certificate of my own uncle. You, Massin, had better ask old Bongrand to seal up everything. You,' he added to his wife, Madame Massin, and Madame Crémière, 'you should sit with Ursule, ladies, and so nothing can be taken. Above all, lock the gate, so that no one can get out.'

The women, who felt the weight of this advice, went at once to Ursule's room, where they found the noble girl, already the object of such cruel suspicions, on her knees in prayer, her face bathed in tears.

Minoret, guessing that they would not remain long with Ursule, and suspicious of his co-heirs' want of trust in him, hastened to the library, saw the volume, which he opened, took out the three certificates, and found in the other thirty bank notes. Notwithstanding his base nature, the big man fancied a whole chime was ringing in each ear, the blood hissed in his brain, as he achieved the theft. In spite of the cold weather, his shirt was wet with perspiration down his back; and his legs shook to such a degree that he dropped into an armchair in the drawing-room as if he had been struck on the head with a sledge-hammer.

'Dear me, how glib the idea of a fortune has made old Minoret!' Massin had said, as they hurried through the town. 'Did you notice?' he observed to Crémière. 'Come here, and go there! How well he knows the game!'

'Yes, for a fat-head he had a style——'

'I say,' said Massin in alarm, 'his wife is with him. They are two too many. Do you run the errands; I will go back again.'

So just as the postmaster had seated himself, he saw the registrar's hot face at the gate, for he had run back with the nimbleness of a ferret.

'Well, what is it?' asked the postmaster, as he let in his co-heir.

'Nothing; I came back to witness the sealing,' replied Massin, glaring at him like a wild cat.

'I wish it were done, and that we could all go quietly home,' said Minoret.

'And we will put some one in charge,' said the registrar. 'La Bougival is capable of anything in the interest of that little minx. We will put in Goupil.'

'Goupil!' cried Minoret; 'he would find the hoard, and we should see nothing but smoke.'

'Let us see,' replied Massin; 'this evening they will watch by the dead. We shall have everything sealed up in an hour, so our wives will be on guard themselves. The funeral must be to-morrow at noon. The inventory cannot be made till after a week.'

'But,' said the colossus smiling, 'we can turn out that minx, and we will engage the mayor's drummer to stop in the house and guard the property.'

'Very good,' said the registrar, 'see to that yourself; you are the head of the Minorets.'

'Now, ladies, ladies, be so good as to wait in the drawing-room. You cannot be off to dinner yet; we must witness the affixing of the seals for our common interest.'

He then took Zélie aside to impart to her Massin's idea about Ursule. The women, whose hearts were full of vengeance, and who longed to turn the tables on 'the little hussy,' hailed the idea of turning her out of the house with glee.

When Bongrand arrived he was indignant at the request made to him, as a friend of the deceased, by Zélie and Madame Massin, to desire Ursule to leave the house.

'Go yourselves and turn her out the home of her father, her godfather, her uncle, her benefactor, her guardian! Go—you who owe your fortunes to her nobility of character—take her by the shoulders—thrust her into the street in the face of the whole town! You think her capable of robbing you? Well, then, engage

a guardian of the property; you have a perfect right to do so. But understand clearly that I will put seals on nothing in her room; it is her own, all that is in it is her property; I shall inform her what her rights are, and advise her to place there everything that belongs to her. —Oh! in your presence!' he added, hearing a murmur of disapproval.

'What?' cried the tax-receiver to the postmaster and the women, who were speechless at Bongrand's angry address.

'A pretty magistrate!' said Minoret.

Ursule, on a low chair, half fainting, her head thrown back, her hair undone, was sobbing from time to time. Her eyes were heavy, their lids swollen; in short, she was in a state of moral and physical prostration, which might have touched the heart of the fiercest creatures excepting heirs.

'Ah, Monsieur Bongrand, after my happy fête, here are death and despair,' she said, with the unconscious poetry of a sweet nature. 'You know what he was. In twenty years he never spoke an impatient word to me! I thought he would live to a hundred! He was a mother to me,' she cried, 'and a kind mother!'

The utterance of her broken ideas brought on a torrent of tears, broken by sobs, and she fell back half senseless.

'My child,' said the Justice, hearing the inheritors on the stairs, 'you have the rest of your life to weep in, and only a moment for business. Bring into your own room everything in the house that belongs to you. The heirs insist on my affixing seals——'

'Oh, his heirs may take everything!' cried Ursule, starting up in a spasm of fierce indignation. 'I have here all that is precious to me!' and she struck her bosom.

'What? what?' asked the postmaster, who, with Massin, now showed his horrible face.

'The memory of his virtues, of his life, of all his

words, the image of his heavenly mind,' she replied, her eyes and cheeks flaming as she raised her hand with a proud gesture.

'Ay, and you have a key there too,' cried Massin, going on all fours like a cat to seize a key which slipped out of the folds of her bodice as she lifted her arm.

'It is the key of his study,' she said, colouring. 'He was sending me there just when he died.'

The two men exchanged a hideous smile, and turned to the Justice with a look that expressed a blighting suspicion. Ursule saw and interpreted the look, malignant on Minoret's part, involuntary on Massin's, and drew herself up, as pale as if all her blood had ebbed; her eyes glistened with the lightnings that can only flash at the cost of vitality, and in a choking voice she said—

'Ah, Monsieur Bongrand, all that is in this room is mine only by my godfather's kindness; they may take it all; I have nothing about me but my clothes; I will go out of it and never come in again.'

She went into her guardian's room, and no entreaties could bring her forth—for the heirs were a little ashamed of their conduct. She desired La Bougival to engage two rooms at the Old Posting Inn till she should find some lodging in the town, where they might stay together. She went into her room only to fetch her prayer-book, and remained all night with the Curé and another priest and Savinien, weeping and praying. Savinien came in after his mother had gone to bed, and knelt down without speaking by Ursule, who gave him the saddest smile, while thanking him for coming so faithfully to share in her sorrows.

'My child,' said Monsieur Bongrand, bringing in a large bundle, 'one of your uncle's relations has taken out of your wardrobe all that you need, for the seals will not be removed for some days, and you will then have everything that belongs to you. In your own interest I have placed seals on your things too.'

'Thank you,' she said, pressing his hand. 'Come and look at him once more. You would think he was sleeping.'

The old man's face had at this moment the transient bloom of beauty which is seen on the face of those who have died without pain; it seemed radiant.

'Did he not give you anything privately before he died?' asked the Justice of Ursule in a whisper.

'Nothing,' she replied. 'He only said something about a letter——'

'Good! that will be found,' said Bongrand. 'Then it is lucky for you that they insisted on the seals.'

At daybreak Ursule bid adieu to the house where her happy childhood had been spent, and above all to the room where her love had had its birth, and which was so dear to her that in the midst of her deep grief she had a tear of regret for this peaceful and happy nook. After gazing for the last time on her windows and on Savinien in turn, she went off to the inn, accompanied by La Bougival, who carried her bundle; by the Justice, who gave her his arm; and by Savinien, her kind protector.

And so, in spite of every precaution, the suspicious lawyer was in the right; Ursule would be bereft of fortune, and at war with the heirs-at-law.

Next day the whole town followed Doctor Minoret's funeral. When they heard of the conduct of the next-of-kin to Ursule, most people thought it natural and necessary; there was an inheritance at stake; the old man was miserly; Ursule might fancy she had rights; the heirs were only protecting their property; and, after all, she had humiliated them enough in their uncle's time —he had made them as welcome as a dog among nine-pins. Désiré Minoret, who was doing no great things in his office, said the neighbours who were envious of the postmaster, came for the funeral. Ursule, unable to attend, was in bed, ill of a nervous fever, brought on as much by the insults offered her as by her deep grief.

'Just look at that hypocrite in tears,' said some of the faction, pointing to Savinien, who was in great sorrow for the doctor's death.

'The question is whether he has any good cause for tears,' remarked Goupil. 'Do not laugh too soon; the seals have not yet been removed.'

'Pooh!' said Minoret, who knew more than he did, 'you have always frightened us for nothing.'

Just as the procession was starting for the church, Goupil had a bitter mortification; he was about to take Désiré's arm, but the young man turned away, thus denying his comrade in the eyes of all Nemours.

'It is of no use to be angry,' said the clerk to himself; 'I should lose all chance of revenge,' and his dry heart swelled in his bosom like a sponge.

Before breaking the seals and making the inventory, they had to wait for the public prosecutor's commission, as public guardian of all orphans, to be issued to Bongrand as his representative. Then the Minoret property, of which every one had talked for ten days, was released, and the inventory was made and witnessed with every formality of the law. Dionis made a job of it; Goupil was glad to have a finger in any mischief; and as the business was a paying one, they took their time over it. They generally breakfasted on the spot. The notary, the clerks, heirs, and witnesses drank the finest wines in the cellar.

In a country town, where every one has his own house, it is rather difficult to find lodgings; and when any business is for sale, the house commonly goes with it. The Justice, who was charged by the court with the guardianship of the orphan girl, saw no way of housing her out of the inn but by buying for her, in the High Street, at the corner of the bridge over the Loing, a small house, with a door opening into a passage; on the ground floor was a sitting-room with two windows

on the street, and a kitchen behind it, with a glass door looking into a yard of about a hundred square feet. A narrow stair, with a borrowed light from the river side, led to the first floor, containing three rooms, and to two attics above.

Monsieur Bongrand borrowed two thousand francs of La Bougival's savings to pay the first instalment of the price of this house, which was six thousand francs, and he obtained a delay for the remainder. To make room for the books which Ursule wished to buy back, Bongrand had a partition pulled down between two of the first floor rooms, having ascertained that the depth of the house was sufficient to hold the book-shelves. He and Savinien hurried on the workmen, who cleaned, painted, and restored this little dwelling with such effect, that, by the end of March, Ursule could move from the inn and find in the plain little house a bedroom just like that from which the heirs had ejected her, for it was full of the furniture brought away by the Justice at the removal of the seals. La Bougival, sleeping overheard, could be brought down at the call of a bell which hung by her young mistress's bed.

The room intended for the library, the ground floor sitting-room, and the kitchen, as yet unfurnished, were coloured, repapered, and painted, awaiting the purchases the young girl might make at the sale of her godfather's household goods.

Though they well knew Ursule's strength of character, the Justice and the Curé both dreaded for her the sudden transition to a life so devoid of the elegance and luxury to which the doctor had always accustomed her. As to Savinien, he fairly wept over it; and he had secretly given the workmen and the upholsterer more than one gratuity in order that Ursule should find no difference, in her own room at least, between the old and the new. But the young girl, who found all her happiness in Savinien's eyes, showed the sweetest resignation. In these cir-

cumstances she charmed her two old friends, and proved to them, for the hundredth time, that only grief of heart could give her real suffering. Her sorrow at her godfather's death was too deep for her to feel the bitterness of her changed fortunes, which, nevertheless, raised a fresh obstacle in the way of her marriage. Savinien's dejection at seeing her brought so low was such that she felt obliged to say in his ear, as they came out of church the morning of her moving into her new abode :—

'Love cannot live without patience ; we must wait.'

As soon as the preamble to the inventory was drawn up, Massin, advised by Goupil, who turned to him in his covert hatred of Minoret, hoping for more from the usurer's self-interest than from Zélie's thriftiness, foreclosed on Madame and Monsieur de Portenduère, whose term for payment had lapsed. The old lady was stunned by a summons to pay up 129,517 francs 55 centimes to the heirs-at-law within twenty-four hours, and interest from the day of the demand, under penalty of the seizure of her landed estate. To borrow money to pay with was impossible. Savinien went to consult a lawyer at Fontainebleau.

'You have a bad set to deal with who will make no compromise ; their point is to drive you to extremities and take possession of the farm at Bordières,' said the lawyer. 'The best thing will be to effect a voluntary sale so as to avoid costs.'

This melancholy news was a blow to the old Bretonne, to whom her son mildly remarked that if she had but consented to his marriage during Minoret's lifetime, the doctor would have placed all his possessions in the hands of Ursule's husband. At this moment they would have been enjoying wealth instead of suffering misery. Though spoken in no tone of reproach, this argument crushed the old lady quite as much as the notion of an immediate and violent eviction.

Ursule, hardly recovered from her fever and the blow

dealt her by the doctor's next-of-kin, was bewildered with dismay when she heard of this fresh disaster. To love, and be unable to help the person beloved, is one of the most terrible pangs that the soul of a high-minded and delicate woman can suffer.

'I meant to buy my uncle's house,' she said. 'I will buy your mother's instead.'

'Is it possible?' said Savinien. 'You are under age, and cannot sell your securities without elaborate formalities, to which the public prosecutor would not give his consent. And, indeed, we shall attempt no resistance. All the town will look on with satisfaction at the discomfiture of a noble house. These townsfolk are like hounds at the death. Happily, I still have ten thousand francs, on which my mother can live till this deplorable business is wound up. And, after all, the inventory of your godfather's property is not yet complete. Monsieur Bongrand still hopes to find something for you. He is as much surprised as I am to find you left penniless. The doctor so often spoke to him and to me of the handsome future he had prepared for you, that we cannot at all understand this state of things.'

'Oh,' said she, 'if I can but buy the books and my godfather's furniture, that they may not be dispersed or pass into strange hands, I am content with my lot.'

'But who knows what price those rascally people may not set on the things you wish to have!'

From Montargis to Fontainebleau the Minoret heirs, and the million they hoped to find, were the talk of the country; but the most careful search made throughout the house since the removal of the seals had led to no discovery. The hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs of the Portenduère mortgage, the fifteen thousand francs a year in three per cents., then quoted at sixty-five, and yielding a capital of three hundred and eighty thousand, the house, valued at forty thousand francs, and the handsome furniture, amounted to a total of about six hundred

thousand francs, which the outer world thought a very consoling figure.

Minoret had at this time some moments of acute uneasiness. La Bougival and Savinien, who, like the Justice, persisted in believing in the existence of a will, came in after every day's cataloguing to ask Bongrand the result of the investigations. The doctor's old friend would exclaim, as the clerks and the heirs-at-law quitted the premises : 'I cannot understand it ! '

As, in the eyes of many superficial observers, two hundred thousand francs apiece to each inheritor seemed a very fair fortune for the provinces, it never occurred to any one to inquire how the doctor could have kept house as he had done on an income of no more than fifteen thousand francs, since he had never drawn the interest on the Portenduère mortgage. Bongrand, Savinien, and the curé alone asked this question in Ursule's interest, and on hearing them give it utterance, the postmaster more than once turned pale.

'And yet we have certainly hunted everywhere—they to find a hoard, and I to find a will, in favour probably of Monsieur de Portenduère,' said the Justice the day the inventory was finished and signed. 'They have sifted the ash-heap, raised the marble tops, felt in his slippers, pulled the bedsteads to pieces, emptied the mattresses, run pins into the counterpanes and coverlets, turned out his eiderdown quilt, examined every scrap of paper, every drawer, dug over the ground in the cellar ; and I was ready to bid them pull the house down.'

'What do you think about it ? ' asked the curé. 'The will has been made away with by one of them.'

'And the securities ? '

'Try to find them ! Try to guess what such creatures would be at—as cunning, as wily, and as greedy as these Massins and Crémières. Make what you can of such a fortune as this Minoret's ; he gets two hundred thousand francs for his share, and he is going to sell his license, his

house, and his interest in the Messageries for three hundred and fifty thousand! What sums of money! To say nothing of the savings on his thirty odd thousand francs derived from real estate.—Poor doctor!'

'The will might have been hidden in the library?' said Savinien.

'And, therefore, I did not dissuade the child from buying the books. But for that, would it not have been folly to let her spend all her ready money in books she will never look into?'

The whole town had believed that the doctor's godchild was in possession of the undiscoverable securities; but when it was known beyond a doubt that her fourteen thousand francs in consols and her little personalty constituted her whole fortune, the doctor's house and furniture excited the greatest curiosity. Some thought that bank notes would be found in the stuffing of the chairs; others that the old man must have hidden them in his books. The sale accordingly afforded the spectacle of the strange precautions taken by the heirs. Dionis, as auctioneer, explained with regard to each article put up for sale that the heirs-at-law were selling the piece of furniture only, and not anything that might be found in it; then, before parting with it, they all submitted it to the closest scrutiny, pinched it, tapped it, shook it; and then gazed after it with the fond looks of a father parting with his only son for a voyage to the Indies.

'Oh, Mademoiselle,' said La Bougival, on her return from the first morning's sale. 'I will not go again. Monsieur Bongrand is right; you could not bear to see it. Everything is upside down. They come and go as if it were the street; the handsomest furniture is used for anything that is wanted; they stand upon it; there is such a mess that a hen could not find her chicks! You might think there had been a fire. Everything is turned out into the courtyard, the wardrobes all open and empty!

Oh, poor, dear man, it is lucky for him he is dead! This sale would have been the death of him!'

Bongrand, who was buying for Ursule the things of which the old man had been fond, and which were suitable for her small house, did not appear when the library was sold. Sharper than the heirs-at-law, whose greed would have made him pay too dear for the books, he gave a commission to a secondhand-book dealer at Melun, who came to Nemours on purpose, and who managed to secure several lots. As a consequence of the suspicions of the heirs, the books were sold one by one. Three thousand volumes were turned over, shaken one by one, held by the boards and fluttered, to make any paper fly out that might be hidden between the leaves; finally, the bindings and backs were closely examined. The lots secured for Ursule mounted up to about six thousand five hundred francs, half of her claims on the estate.

The bookcase was not delivered over till it had been carefully examined by a cabinetmaker, noted for his experience of secret drawers and panels, who was sent for expressly from Paris. When the Justice gave orders that the bookcase and books should be conveyed to Mademoiselle Mirouët's house, the heirs-at-law felt some vague alarms, which were subsequently dissipated by seeing that she was no richer than before.

Minoret bought his uncle's house, which the co-heirs ran up to fifty thousand francs, imagining that the postmaster hoped to find a treasure in the walls. And the deed of sale contained stipulations on this point. A fortnight after the conclusion of the whole business, Minoret, having sold his post-horses and his business to the son of a wealthy farmer, moved into his uncle's house, on which he spent considerable sums in improvements and repairs. So Minoret condemned himself to live within a few yards of Ursule.

'I only hope,' said he to Dionis the day when Savinien and his mother had notice of the foreclosure, 'that now

we shall be rid of this precious nobility. We will turn them out, one by one.'

'The old lady, with her fourteen quarterings, will not stay to witness the disaster,' said Goupil. 'She will go to die in Brittany, where, no doubt, she will find a wife for her son.'

'I don't think so,' replied the notary, who, that morning, had drawn up the agreement of purchase for Bongrand. 'Ursule has just bought the widow Richard's little house.'

'That cursed little fool does not know what to do next to annoy us!' cried Minoret, very rashly.

'Why, what can it matter to you if she lives at Nemours?' asked Goupil, astonished at the vehement disgust shown by the great simpleton.

'Do you not know,' said Minoret, turning as red as a poppy, 'that my son is fool enough to be in love with her? I would give a hundred crowns to see Ursule well out of Nemours.'

From this it is easy to understand how much Ursule, poor and resigned as she was, would be in Minoret's way, with all his money. The worry of securities to be realised, of selling his business, the expeditions consequent on such unwonted affairs, his disputes with his wife over every little detail, and the purchase of the doctor's house, where Zélie wished to live quite plainly for her son's sake, —all this turmoil, so unlike the quiet course of his usual life, prevented the great Minoret from thinking of his victim. But a few days after he had settled in the Rue des Bourgeois, about the middle of May, on returning from a walk, he heard the sounds of a piano, and saw La Bougival sitting in the window, like a dragon guarding a treasure; and at the same moment he heard an importunate voice within himself.

An explanation of the reason why, in a man of his temper, the sight of Ursule, who did not even suspect the theft he had committed to her injury, became at once unendurable, why the sight of her dignity in misfortune filled him with the desire to get her out of the town, and

why this desire assumed the character of hatred and passion, would lead perhaps to a complete moral treatise. Perhaps he felt that he was not the legitimate possessor of the thirty-six thousand francs while she to whom they belonged was so close to him. Perhaps he thought that by some chance his theft would be discovered, so long as those he had robbed were within reach. Perhaps, even, in a nature so primitive, so rough-hewn as his was, and hitherto always law-abiding, Ursule's presence awoke some kind of remorse. Perhaps this remorse was the more poignant because he had so much more wealth that had been legitimately acquired.

He no doubt ascribed these stirrings of his conscience wholly to Ursule's presence, fancying that if she were out of sight these uncomfortable pangs would vanish too. Or perhaps, again, crime has its own counsel of perfection. An ill deed begun may demand its climax, a first blow may require a second—a deathblow. Robbery, perhaps, inevitably leads to murder. Minoret had committed the theft without a moment's pause for reflection, events had crowded on so swiftly; reflection came afterwards. Now, if the reader has fully pictured the appearance and build of this man, he will understand the prodigious results on him of an idea. Remorse is more than an idea; it is the outcome of a feeling which can no more be smothered than love can, and which is tyrannous too. But just as Minoret had not hesitated for an instant to possess himself of the fortune intended for Ursule, so he mechanically felt the need of getting her away from Nemours when the sight of her cheated innocence stung him. Being an imbecile, he never considered consequences; he went on from danger to danger, urged by his instinctive cupidity, like a wild animal which cannot foresee the wiles of the hunter, and trusts to its swiftness and strength.

Before long the richer townspeople, who were wont to meet at the notary's office, observed a change in the

manners and demeanour of the man who had always been so light-hearted.

'I cannot think what has come over Minoret,' said his wife, to whom he had never revealed his bold stroke. 'He is all anyhow.'

The world at large accounted for Minoret's being sick of himself—for in his face the expression of thought was one of boredom—by the fact that he had absolutely nothing to do, and by the transition from an active to an indolent life. While Minoret was scheming to crush Ursule's life, La Bougival never let a day pass without making to her foster-child some allusion to the fortune she ought to have had, or comparing her humble lot with that which the late 'Monsieur' had intended her to enjoy, and of which he had spoken to her—La Bougival.

'And besides,' said she, 'it is not out of greediness; but would not Monsieur, so kind as he was, have left me some little money?'

'Am I not here?' Ursule would reply, and forbid any further words on the subject.

She could not bear the taint of any self-interested thought to touch the loving, melancholy and sweet memories which clung round the image of the old doctor, of whom a sketch in black and white chalk, done by her drawing-master, hung in her little sitting-room. To her fresh and strong imagination the sight of this sketch was sufficient to bring her godfather before her; she thought of him constantly, and was surrounded by the objects he had loved—his deep armchair, the furniture of his study, his backgammon-board, and the piano he had given her. The two old friends who remained to her, the Abbé Chaperon and Monsieur Bongrand, the only persons whose visits she would receive, were like two living memories of the past in the midst of the objects to which her regrets almost gave life—of that past which was linked to the present by the love which her godfather had approved and blessed.

Ere long the sadness of her thoughts, insensibly softened by time, cast its hue on all her life, bringing everything into indefinable harmony; exquisite neatness, perfect order in the arrangement of the furniture, a few flowers brought every morning by Savinien, pretty nothings, a stamp of peace set on everything by the young girl's habits, and which made her home attractive. After breakfast and after church she regularly practised and sang; then she took her embroidery, sitting in the window towards the street. At four o'clock Savinien, on his return from the walk he took in all weather, would find the window half open, and sit on the outer sill to chat with her for half-an-hour. In the evening the curé or the Justice would call, but she would never allow Savinien to accompany them. Nor would she accept a proposal from Madame de Portenduère, whom her son persuaded to invite Ursule to live with her.

The young girl and La Bougival lived with the strictest economy; they did not spend, on all included, more than sixty francs a month. The old nurse was indefatigable; she washed and ironed, she cooked only twice a week, and kept the remains of the cooked food, which the mistress and maid ate cold; for Ursule hoped to save seven hundred francs a year to pay the remainder of the price of her house. This austere conduct, with her modesty and resignation to a penurious life, after having enjoyed a luxurious existence, when her lightest whims were worshipped, gained her the regard of certain persons. She was respected, and never talked about. The heirs, once satisfied, did her full justice. Savinien admired such strength of character in so young a girl. Now and again, on coming out of church, Madame de Portenduère would say a few kind words to Ursule; she invited her to dinner twice, and came herself to fetch her. If it were not indeed happiness, at any rate it was peace.

But a successful transaction, in which the Justice displayed his old skill as a lawyer, brought to a head

Minoret's persecution of Ursule, which had hitherto smouldered, and not gone beyond covert ill-will. As soon as the old doctor's estate was fairly settled, the Justice, at Ursule's entreaty, took up the cause of the Portenduères, and undertook to get them out of their difficulties; but, in calling on the old lady, whose opposition to Ursule's happiness made him furious, he did not conceal from her that he was devoting himself to her interests solely to please Mademoiselle Mirouët. He selected one of his former clerks to plead for the Portenduères at Fontainebleau, and himself conducted the appeal, for a decree against foreclosure. He intended to take advantage of the interval of time which must elapse between the granting of this decree and Massin's renewed appeal to re-let the farm at a rent of six thousand francs, and to extract from the lessee a good premium and the payment of a year's rent in advance. Thenceforth the whist parties met again at Madame de Portenduère's, consisting of himself and the curé, Savinien and Ursule, for whom the Justice and the Abbé called every evening, and they saw her home again.

In June, Bongrand got his decree annulling the proceedings taken by Massin against the Portenduères. He at once signed a new lease; got thirty-two thousand francs from the farmer, and a rent of six thousand francs a year for eight years; then, in the evening, before the transactions could get abroad, he went to Zélie, who, as he knew, was puzzled for an investment for her savings, and suggested to her that she should buy Bordières for two hundred and twenty thousand francs.

'I would clench the bargain on the spot,' said Minoret, 'if only I were sure that the Portenduères were going to live anywhere than at Nemours.'

'Why?' asked the Justice.

'We want to be quit of nobles at Nemours.'

'I fancy I have heard the old lady say that if she could settle matters, she could live nowhere but in Brit-

tany on what would be left. She talks of selling her house.'

'Well, sell it to me then,' said Minoret.

'But you talk as if the money were yours!' said Zélie. 'What are you going to do with two houses?'

'If I do not settle the matter of the farm with you this evening,' said the Justice, 'our lease will become known; we shall have fresh proceedings against us in three days, and I shall fail to pull the thing through. My heart is set on it; I shall go on, this very hour, to Melun, where some farmers I know will take Bordières off my hands with their eyes shut. Then you will have lost the opportunity of an investment at three per cent. in the district of le Rouvre.'

'And why then did you come to us?' said Zélie.

'Because I know you to be rich, while my older clients will want a few days to enable them to hand over a hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs. I want no delays.'

'Get *her* away from Nemours, and they are yours!' said Minoret.

'You must see that I cannot pledge the Portenduères in any way,' replied Bongrand, 'but I feel sure that they will not remain at Nemours.

On this assurance Minoret, to whom Zélie gave a nudge, undertook to pay off the Portenduères' debt to the doctor's estate. The contract for the sale was made out by Dionis, and the Justice, very content, made Minoret agree to the terms of the renewed lease, though he perceived rather late, as well as Zélie, that the rent was payable a year in advance, leaving the last year, in point of fact, rent free.

By the end of June, Bongrand could take Madame de Portenduère a receipt in full and the remnant of her fortune, a hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs, which he advised her to invest in State securities at five per cent., as well as Savinien's ten thousand; this yielded an income

of about six thousand francs a year. Thus, instead of having lost, the old lady had gained two thousand francs a year by the sale of her estate. She and her son therefore remained at Nemours.

Minoret thought he had been tricked, as if the Justice could possibly have known that it was Ursule's presence that was intolerable to him, and felt a deep resentment, which added to his hatred of his victim. Then began the covert drama, terrible in its effects, the struggle between two persons' feelings; Minoret's, which prompted him to drive Ursule to leave Nemours; and Ursule's, which gave her the fortitude to endure a persecution of which the cause for long remained inexplicable, a singular state of things to which previous events had all led up and conduced, and to which they had been the prologue.

Madame Minoret, to whom her husband presented plate and a dinner service worth altogether twenty thousand francs, gave a handsome dinner every Sunday, the day on which her son brought friends over from Fontainebleau. For these banquets Zélie would send for some rare dainties from Paris, thus inciting Dionis the notary to imitate her display. Goupil, whom the Minorets did their utmost to banish as a man of ill-repute and a blot on their magnificence, was not invited to the house till the end of July, a month after the retirement into private ease of the old postmaster and mistress. The clerk, quite alive to this deliberate neglect, was obliged to treat even Désiré with formality, and drop the familiar *tu*; and Désiré, since his appointment to official life, had assumed a grave and haughty air even among his family.

'You have forgotten Esther, then, since you are in love with Mademoiselle Mirouët?' said Goupil to the young lawyer.

'In the first place, Esther is dead, Monsieur. And in the second, I never thought of Ursule,' was the reply.

'Hey day—what did you tell me, Daddy Minoret?' cried Goupil audaciously.

Minoret, caught in the very act by so formidable a foe, would have been put out of countenance but for the scheme for which he had invited Goupil to dinner, remembering the proposal formerly made by the clerk to hinder Ursule's marriage to young Portenduère. His only answer was to lead the clerk abruptly away and out into the garden.

'You are nearly eight-and-twenty, my good fellow,' said he, 'and I do not see that you are on the high road to fortune. I wish you well; for, after all, you were my son's companion. Listen to me: If you can persuade that little Mirouët to become your wife—she has forty thousand francs at any rate—as sure as my name is Minoret, I will give you the money to buy a business at Orleans.'

'No,' said Goupil, 'I should never become known. At Montargis——'

'No,' interrupted Minoret, 'but at Sens——'

'Very good, say Sens,' replied the hideous clerk. 'It is an archbishop's see, and I have no objection to a religious centre. A little hypocrisy helps one to get on. Besides, the girl is very pious; she will be a success there.'

'It must be quite understood that I only give the hundred thousand francs in consideration of my young relative's marriage. I wish to provide for her out of regard for my deceased uncle.'

'And why not out of regard for me?' said Goupil mischievously, for he suspected some secret motive for Minoret's conduct. 'Was it not information given by me that enabled you to get twenty-four thousand francs in rent from a single holding in a ring fence round the Château du Rouvre? With your meadows and mill on the other side of the Loing you can add sixteen thousand to that. Come, old Burly, will you play your game with me above board?'

'Yes.'

'Well, just to make you feel my claws, I was brewing a plan with Massin to get possession of le Rouvre—park, gardens, preserves, timber, and all.'

'You had better!' exclaimed Zélie, interrupting them.

'Well,' said Goupil, with a viperine glance at her, 'if I choose, Massin will have it all to-morrow for two hundred thousand francs.'

'Leave us, wife,' said the colossus, taking Zélie by the arm, and turning her about. 'We understand each other. —We have had so much business on our hands,' he went on, coming back to Goupil, 'that we have not been able to think of you; but I rely on your friendship to let us get le Rouvre.'

'An old Marquisate,' said Goupil slily, 'which in your hands will soon be worth fifty thousand francs a year—more than two millions at the present price of money.'

'And then our boy can marry the daughter of a Marshal of France, or the heiress of some ancient house, which will help him on to be a judge in Paris,' said the postmaster, opening his huge snuff-box, and offering it to Goupil.

'Well, then, all is square and above board?' asked Goupil, shaking his fingers.

Minoret wrung his hand and said—

'My word of honour.'

Like all cunning men, the clerk fancied, happily for Minoret, that this marriage with Ursule was a mere excuse for making up to him, now he had been playing off Massin against them.

'It is not his doing,' said he to himself. 'I know my Zélie's hand; she has taught him his part. Bah! Let Massin slide! Within three years I shall be returned as député for Sens,' he thought.

Then, catching sight of Bongrand on his way to his game of whist over the way, he rushed into the street.

'You take a great interest in Ursule Mirouët, my dear Monsieur Bongrand,' said he; 'you cannot be indifferent to her future prospects. This is our programme. She may marry a notary whose business is to be in a large district town. This notary, who will certainly be député in three years, will settle a hundred thousand francs on her.'

'She can do better,' said Bongrand stiffly. 'Since Madame de Portenduère's misfortunes her health is failing. Yesterday she looked dreadfully ill; she is dying of grief. Savinien will have six thousand francs a year; Ursule has forty thousand francs; I will invest their capital on Massin's principle—but honestly—and in ten years they will have a little fortune.'

'Savinien would be a fool. He can marry Mademoiselle du Rouvre any day he likes, an only daughter, to whom her uncle and aunt will also leave splendid fortunes.'

'"When love has got hold of us, farewell prudence,"' says la Fontaine. 'But who is your notary, for, after all——?' said Bongrand, out of curiosity.

'I,' said Goupil, in a tone that made the Justice start.

'You?' said he, not attempting to conceal his disgust.

'Very good, sir; your servant,' retorted Goupil, with a glare of venom, hatred, and defiance.

'Would you like to be the wife of a notary who will settle a hundred thousand francs on you?' cried Bongrand, entering the little sitting-room, and speaking to Ursule, who was sitting by Madame de Portenduère. Ursule and Savinien started as if by one impulse, and looked at each other; she with a smile, he not daring to show his uneasiness.

'I am not my own mistress,' replied Ursule, holding out her hand to Savinien in such a way that his old mother could not see it.

'I refused the offer without consulting you even.'

'But why?' said Madame de Portenduère. 'It seems to me, my dear, that a notary's profession is a very respectable one.'

'I prefer my peaceful poverty,' she replied, 'for it is opulence in comparison with what I had a right to expect of life. My old nurse spares me many anxieties, and I would not exchange my present lot, which suits me, for an unknown future.'

Next morning the post brought a poisoned dart to two hearts in the shape of two anonymous letters—one to Madame de Portenduère, and one to Ursule. This is the letter received by the old lady:—

'You love your son, you would wish to see him married as beseems the name he bears, and you are fostering his fancy for an ambitious little thing without any fortune, by receiving at your house one Ursule, the daughter of a regimental bandmaster; while you might marry him to Mademoiselle du Rouvre, whose two uncles, the Marquis de Ronquerolles and the Chevalier du Rouvre, each having thirty thousand francs a year, intend to settle a large sum on their niece on her marriage, so as not to leave their fortune to her foolish old father, M. du Rouvre, who wastes his substance. Madame de Sérizy—Aunt Clémentine du Rouvre—who has just lost her only son in Algiers, will no doubt also adopt her niece. Some one who wishes you well believes that Savinien would be accepted.'

This is the letter written to Ursule:—

'Dear Ursule,—There is in Nemours a young man who idolises you; he cannot see you at work at your window without such emotions as prove to him that his love is for life. This young man is gifted with a will of iron and a perseverance which nothing can daunt. Accept his love with favour, for his intentions are of the purest, and he humbly asks your hand in the hope of making you happy. His fortune, though suitable even now, is nothing to

what he will make it when you are his wife. You will some day be received at Court as the wife of a minister, and one of the first ladies in the land. As he sees you every day, though you cannot see him, place one of La Bougival's pots of pinks in your window, and that will tell him that he may appear before you.'

Ursule burnt this letter without mentioning it to Savinien. Two days later she received another, in these terms:—

'You were wrong, dear Ursule, not to reply to him who loves you better than his life. You fancy you will marry Savinien, but you are strangely mistaken. That marriage will never take place. Madame de Portenduère, who will see you no more at her house, is going this morning to le Rouvre, on foot, in spite of the weak state she is in, to ask Mademoiselle du Rouvre in marriage for Savinien. He will finally yield. What objection can he make? The young lady's uncles will settle their fortune on their niece at her marriage. That fortune amounts to sixty thousand francs a year.'

This letter tortured Ursule's heart by making her acquainted with the torments of jealousy, pangs hitherto unknown, which, to her finely organised nature, so alive to suffering, swamped the present, the future, and even the past in grief. From the moment when she received this fatal missive, she sat motionless in the doctor's armchair, her eyes fixed on vacancy, and lost in a sorrowful reverie. In an instant the chill of death had come on her instead of the glow of exquisite life. Alas! It was worse; it was, in fact, the dreadful awakening of the dead to find that there is no God—the masterpiece of that strange genius Jean Paul. Four times did La Bougival try to persuade Ursule to eat her breakfast; she saw the girl take up her bread and lay it down again, unable to carry it to her lips. When she ventured to offer a remonstrance, Ursule stopped her with a wave of the hand, saying Hush! in a terrible tone, as despotic as it had

hitherto always been sweet. La Bougival, watching her mistress through a glass door between the rooms, saw her turn alternately as red as if fever were consuming her, and then blue, as though an ague fit had followed the fever. By about four o'clock, when Ursule rose every few minutes to look whether Savinien were coming, and Savinien came not, she became evidently worse. Jealousy and doubt destroy all the bashfulness of love. Ursule, who till now had never allowed her passion to be detected in the least gesture, put on her hat and her little shawl, and ran into the passage to go out and meet Savinien; but a remnant of reserve brought her back into the little sitting-room. There she wept.

When the curé came in the evening, the poor old nurse stopped him on the threshold.

'Oh, Monsieur le Curé, I do not know what ails Mademoiselle; she——'

'I know,' said the priest sadly, silencing the frightened attendant.

The Abbé then told Ursule what she had not dared to ask: 'Madame de Portenduère had gone to dine at le Rouvre.'

'And Savinien?'

'He too.'

Ursule shuddered nervously—a shudder which thrilled the Abbé Chaperon as though he had received a shock from a Leyden jar, and he felt a painful turmoil at his heart.

'So we shall not go to her house this evening,' said he. 'But, indeed, my child, you will be wise never to go there again. The old lady might receive you in a way that would wound your pride. We, having brought her to listen to the idea of your marriage to Savinien, cannot imagine what ill-wind has blown to change her views in an instant.'

'I am prepared for anything; nothing can astonish me now,' said Ursule in a tone of conviction. 'In such

extremities it is a great comfort to feel that I have done nothing to offend God.'

'Submit, my dear daughter, and never try to inquire into the ways of Providence,' said the curé.

'I do not wish to show any unjust suspicion of M. de Portenduère's character——'

'Why do you no longer call him Savinien?' asked the Abbé, observing a certain bitterness in Ursule's tone.

'My dear Savinien!' she went on, with a burst of tears. 'Yes, my good friend,' she said, sobbing, 'a voice assures me that his heart is as noble as his birth. He has not merely told me that he loves me; he has proved it in a thousand delicate ways, and by heroically controlling the ardour of his passion. Lately, when he took my hand that I held out to him, when Monsieur Bongrand proposed to me for a notary, I declare to you that it was the first time I had ever offered it to him. Though he began, indeed, by a jest, blowing me a kiss across the street, since then our affection has never once, as you know, overstepped the strictest limits; but I may tell you—you who read my whole soul excepting the one spot which is open only to the angels—well, this affection is in me the foundation of many virtues. It has enabled me to accept my poverty; it has, perhaps, softened the bitterness of the irreparable loss for which I mourn now more in my garments than in my heart! Yes, I have done wrong—for my love has been greater than my gratitude to my godfather; and God has avenged him! How could I help it? What I valued myself for was as Savinien's wife. I have been too proud; and it is that pride, perhaps, that God is punishing. God alone, as you have often told me, ought to be the spring and end of all we do.'

The curé was touched as he saw the tears rolling down her cheeks, already paler. The greater the poor girl's confidence had been, the lower she had fallen.

'However,' she went on, 'reduced once more to my

orphaned state, I shall be able to accustom myself to the proper frame of mind. After all, could I bear to be a stone round the neck of the man I love? What should he do here? Who am I that I should aspire to him? Do I not love him with such perfect love that it is equal to a complete sacrifice of my happiness, of my hopes? And you know I have often blamed myself for setting my love on a tomb, and looking forward to the morrow of that old lady's death. If Savinien can be rich and happy through another woman, I have just money enough to purchase my admission to a convent, to which I shall at once retire. There ought not to be two loves in a woman's heart, any more than there are two Lords in heaven. The religious life will have its charms for me.'

'He could not allow his mother to go alone to le Rouvre,' said the kind priest gently.

'We will talk no more of it, my dear Monsieur Chaperon. I will write to him this evening to give him his liberty. I am glad to be obliged to close the windows of my sitting-room.'

She then told him about the anonymous letters, saying that she would offer no encouragement to this unknown suitor.

'Ah! it is an anonymous letter that has prompted Madame de Portenduère's expedition to le Rouvre!' exclaimed the curé. 'You are, no doubt, the object of some malignant persecution.'

'But why? Neither Savinien nor I have injured any one, and we are doing no harm to any one here.'

'Well, well, my child. We will take advantage of this tornado which has broken up our little party to arrange our poor old friend's books; they are still piled in disorder. Bongrand and I will set them straight, for we had thought of hunting through them. Put your trust in God; but remember, too, that in the Justice and myself you have two devoted friends.'

'And that is much,' she said, walking to the end of

the little alley with the priest, and craning her neck like a bird looking out of its nest, still hoping to see Savinien.

At this instant Minoret and Goupil, coming home from a walk in the country, stopped as they were passing, and the heir-at-law said to Ursule—

'What is the matter, cousin?—for we are still cousins, are we not? You look altered.'

Goupil cast such ardent eyes on Ursule that she was frightened. She ran in without replying.

'She is a wild bird,' said Minoret to the curé.

'Mademoiselle Mirouët is quite right not to talk to men on her doorstep; she is too young . . .'

'Oh!' said Goupil; 'you must be well aware that she does not lack lovers!'

The curé bowed hastily, and hurried off to the Rue des Bourgeois.

'Well,' said the lawyer's clerk to Minoret, 'the fat is burning. She is as pale as death already; within a fortnight she will have left the town. You will see.'

'It is better to have you for a friend than for an enemy,' said Minoret, struck by the horrible smile which gave to Goupil's face the diabolical expression which Joseph Bridau gave to Goethe's Mephistopheles.

'I believe you!' replied Goupil. 'If she will not marry me, I will make her die of grief.'

'Do so, boy, and I will give you money enough to start in business in Paris. Then you can marry a rich wife——'

'Poor girl!—why, what harm has she done you?' asked the clerk in surprise.

'I am sick of her,' said Minoret roughly.

'Only wait till Monday, and you shall see how I will make her squirm,' replied Goupil, studying the postmaster's countenance.

Next morning La Bougival went to see Savinien, and as she gave him a note, she said, 'I don't know what

the dear child has written to you about; but she looks like a corpse this morning.'

Who, on reading this letter to Savînien, can fail to picture the sufferings Ursule must have endured during the past night?

'MY DEAR SAVINIEN,—Your mother wishes you to marry Mademoiselle du Rouvre, I am told; and perhaps she is right. You see yourself between a life almost of poverty and a position of wealth, between the wife of your heart and a woman of fashion, between obedience to your mother and obedience to your own choice—for I still believe that I am your choice. Savinien, since you must decide, I wish that you should do so in perfect freedom. I give you back your word—given not to me, but to yourself, at a moment which I can never forget, and which, like all the days that have passed since then, was angelically pure and sweet. That memory will be enough for me to live on. If you should persist in adhering to your vows, a dark and dreadful thought would always trouble my happiness. In the midst of our privations, which you now take so lightly, you might afterwards reflect that, if you had but followed the rules of the world, things might have been very different with you. If you were the man to utter such a thought, it would be my death-warrant in bitter anguish; and if you did not say it, I should be suspicious of the slightest cloud on your brow. Dear Savinien, I have always cared for you more than for anything on earth. I might do so; for my godfather, though jealous of you, said to me, "Love him, my child! you will certainly be his, and he yours some day." When I went to Paris I loved you without hope, and that love was enough for me. I do not know whether I can revert to that state of mind, but I will try. What are we to each other at this moment! A brother and sister. Let us remain so. Marry the happy girl, whose joy it will be to restore to

your name the lustre due to it, which I, according to your mother, must tarnish. You shall never hear me mentioned. The world will applaud you; I, believe me, shall never blame you, and shall always love you. So, farewell.'

'Wait!' cried the young man. He made La Bougival sit down, and hastily wrote these few lines:—

'My dear Ursule,—Your letter breaks my heart, for you are inflicting on yourself much useless pain, and for the first time our hearts have failed to understand each other. That you are not already my wife is because I cannot yet marry without my mother's consent. After all, are not eight thousand francs a year, in a pretty cottage on the banks of the Loing, quite a fortune? We calculated that, with La Bougival, we could save five thousand francs a year. You allowed me one evening in your uncle's garden to regard you as my promised wife, and you cannot by yourself alone break the ties which bind us both. Need I tell you that I plainly declared, yesterday, to Monsieur du Rouvre that, even if I were free, I would not accept a fortune from a young lady whom I did not know? My mother refuses to see you any more; I lose the happiness of my evenings, but do not abridge the brief moments when I may speak with you at your window. Till this evening, then—— Nothing can part us.'

'Go now, my good woman. She must not have a moment's needless anxiety.'

That afternoon, on his return from the walk he took every day on purpose to pass by Ursule's dwelling, Savinien found her somewhat the paler for all these sudden agitations.

'I feel as though I had never till this moment known what a happiness it is to see you!' said she.

'You yourself said to me,' replied Savinien, with a smile, 'that "Love cannot exist without patience; I will wait"—for I remember all your words. But have you, my dear child, divided love from faith? Ah! this is the end of all our differences. You have always said that you loved me more than I could love you. But have I ever doubted you?' he asked, giving her a bunch of wild-flowers chosen so as to symbolise his feelings.

'You have no reason to doubt me,' she replied. 'Besides, you do not know all,' she added, in a tone of uneasiness.

She had given orders that no letters to her by post should be taken in. But without her being able to guess by what conjuring trick the thing had been done, a few minutes after Savinien had left her, and she had watched him round the turning of the Rue des Bourgeois out of the High Street, she found on her armchair a piece of paper on which was written—

'Tremble! the lover scorned will be worse than a tiger.'

Notwithstanding Savinien's entreaties, she would not, out of prudence, trust him with the dreadful secret of her fears. The ineffable joy of seeing him again, after believing him lost to her, could alone enable her to forget the mortal chill which came over her. Every one knows the intolerable torment of awaiting an indefinite misfortune. Suffering then assumes the proportions of the unknown, which is certainly infinitude, to the mind. To Ursule it was the greatest anguish. She found herself starting violently at the slightest sound; she distrusted the silence; she suspected the walls of conspiracies. Her peaceful sleep was broken. Goupil, without knowing anything of her constitution—as fragile as that of a flower—had, by the instinct of wickedness, hit on the poison that would blight it—kill it.

The next day, however, passed without any shock. Ursule played the piano till very late, and went to bed almost

reassured, and overpowered by sleep. At about midnight she was roused by a band, consisting of a clarionet, a hautbois, a flute, a cornet-à-pistons, a trombone, a bassoon, a fife, and a triangle. All the neighbours were at their windows. The poor child, upset by seeing a crowd in the street, was struck to the heart on hearing a hoarse, vulgar, man's voice crying out—

'For the fair Ursule Mirouët, a serenade from her lover!'

At church next morning all the town was in a hubbub; and as Ursule entered and quitted the church, she saw the Square filled with groups staring at her, and displaying the most odious curiosity. The serenade had set every tongue wagging, for every one was lost in conjecture. Ursule got home more dead than alive, and went out no more, the curé having advised her to say vespers at home. On going in she saw, lying in the passage paved with red brick that ran from the street to the courtyard behind, a letter that had been slipped under the door; she picked it up and read it, prompted by the desire for some explanation. The least sensitive reader can imagine her feelings as she saw these terrible words:—

'Make up your mind to be my wife, rich and adored. I will have you. If you are not mine alive, you shall be, dead. You may ascribe to your refusal misfortunes which will not fall on you alone.—He who loves you and will some day possess you.'

Strange irony! at the moment when the gentle victim of this conspiracy was drooping like a plucked flower, Mesdemoiselles Massin, Dionis, and Crémière were envying her lot.

'She is a happy girl,' they were saying. 'Men are devoted to her, flatter her taste, are ready to quarrel for her. The serenade was delightful, it would seem! There was a cornet-à-pistons!'

'What is a cornet-à-pistons?'

'A new sort of musical instrument—there—as long as that!' said Angélique Crémière to Paméla Massin.

Early next day Savinien went off to Fontainebleau to inquire who had ordered the musicians of the regiment stationed there; but as there were two men to each instrument, it was impossible to ascertain which had gone to Nemours, since the Colonel prohibited them from playing for private persons without his leave. Monsieur de Portenduère had an interview with the public prosecutor, Ursule's legal guardian, and explained to him the serious effect such scenes must have on a young girl so delicate and fragile as she was, begging him to find out the instigator of this serenade by means that the law could set in motion.

Three days later, in the middle of the night, a second serenade was given by three violins, a flute, a guitar, and a hautbois. On this occasion the musicians made off by the road to Montargis, where there was just then a troupe of actors. Between two pieces a strident and drunken voice had proclaimed:—

'To the daughter of Bandmaster Mirouët.'

Thus all Nemours was apprised of the profession of Ursule's father, the secret the old doctor had so carefully kept.

But this time Savinien did not go to Montargis; he received in the course of the day an anonymous letter from Paris containing this terrible prophecy:—

'You shall not marry Ursule. If you wish her to live, make haste and surrender her to him who loves her more than you do; for he has become a musician and an artist to please her, and would rather see her dead than as your wife.'

By this time the town doctor of Nemours was seeing Ursule three times a day, for this covert persecution had brought her to the point of death. Plunged, as she felt

herself, by a diabolical hand into a slough of mud, the gentle girl behaved like a martyr; she lay perfectly silent, raising her eyes to heaven without tears, awaiting further blows with fervent prayer, and hoping for the stroke that might be her death.

'I am glad to be unable to go downstairs,' said she to Monsieur Bongrand and the Abbé, who stayed with her as much as possible. '*He* would come, and I feel unworthy to meet the looks with which he is in the habit of making me blest. Do you think he doubts me?'

'Why, if Savinien cannot discover the moving spirit of all this shameful business, he means to ask for the intervention of the Paris police,' said Bongrand.

'The unknown persons must know that they have killed me,' she replied. 'They will be quiet now.'

The curé, Bongrand, and Savinien puzzled themselves with conjectures and suppositions. Savinien, Tiennette, La Bougival, and two devoted adherents of the curé's constituted themselves spies, and were constantly on the watch for a whole week; but Goupil could never be betrayed by a sign, he pulled all the wires with his own hand. The Justice was the first to suspect that the author of the evil was frightened at his own success. Ursule was as pale and weak as a consumptive English girl. The spies relaxed their efforts. There were no more serenades nor letters. Savinien ascribed the cessation of these odious means to the secret energy of the law-officers, to whom he had sent the letters written to Ursule, to himself, and to his mother.

The armistice was of no long duration. When the doctor had checked the course of Ursule's nervous fever, just as she was recovering her spirit, one morning, about the middle of July, a ladder of ropes was found attached to her window. The postillion who had ridden with the night mail deposed that a little man was in the act of coming down it just as he was passing; but in spite of

his wishing to stop, his horses, having set off down hill from the bridge, at the corner of which stood Ursule's little house, had carried him some way out of Nemours.

An opinion, suggested in Dionis' drawing-room, attributed these manœuvres to the Marquis du Rouvre, at that time in great need of money, who, it was supposed, by hastening Savinien's marriage with his daughter, would be able to save the Château of le Rouvre from his creditors. Madame de Portenduère also, it was said, looked with favour on anything that could discredit, dishonour, and blight Ursule; but when the young girl seemed likely to die, the old lady was almost conquered.

This last stroke of malice so much distressed the Curé Chaperon that it made him ill enough to compel him to remain at home for some days. Poor Ursule, in whom this cruel attack had brought on a relapse, received by post a note from the curé, which was not refused, as his writing was familiar.

'My child, leave Nemours, and so discomfit the malice of your unknown enemies. Perhaps what they aim at is to imperil Savinien's life. I will tell you more when I can go to see you.' This note was signed, 'Your devoted friend Chaperon.'

When Savinien, almost driven mad, went to call on the priest, the poor man read and re-read the letter, so much was he horrified at the perfection with which his writing and signature had been imitated, for he had written nothing, and, if he had written, he would not have employed the post to carry a letter to Ursule. The mortal anguish to which this last villainy reduced Ursule compelled Savinien once more to apply to the public prosecutor, showing him the forged letter from the Abbé.

'It is murder,' said the young man to the lawyer. 'Murder is being committed by means not provided against by law, on the person of an orphan placed under your protection by the Civil Code.'

'If you can discover any means of interfering,' replied the public prosecutor, 'I am ready to adopt them; but I know of none. This rascally anonymous letter gives the best advice. Mademoiselle Mirouët must be sent to the care of the Ladies of the Adoration. Meanwhile, by my order, the commissary of police at Fontainebleau will authorise you to carry weapons in your own defence. I myself have been to le Rouvre, and Monsieur du Rouvre is justifiably indignant at the suspicions that have attached to him. Minoret, my deputy's father, is in treaty for the purchase of his château. Mademoiselle du Rouvre is to marry a rich Polish Count. Monsieur du Rouvre himself was about to leave the neighbourhood on the day of my visit, to escape being seized for debt.'

Désiré, questioned by his chief, dared not say what he thought; he recognised Goupil in all this. Goupil alone was capable of conducting a plot which should thus shave close to the Penal Code without being amenable to any of its provisions. The impunity, the secrecy, the succes of it, increased Goupil's audacity. The terrible man had set Massin, who had become his dupe, on the tracks or the Marquis du Rouvre, to compel that gentleman to sell the rest of his land to Minoret. After opening negotiations with a notary at Sens, he determined to try a last stroke to gain possession of Ursule. He thought he could imitate some young men of Paris, who owed their wife and fortune to an elopement. His services done to Minoret, Massin, and Crémière, and the protection of Dionis, mayor of Nemours, would allow of his hushing the matter up. He at once determined to cast off his mask, believing that Ursule was incapable of resistance in the state of weakness to which he had brought her. However, before risking the last card or his base game, he thought it well to have an explanation at le Rouvre, whither he went with Minoret, who was going there for the first time since the agreement was signed.

Minoret had just received a confidential letter from his son, asking him for information as to what was going on with regard to Ursule, before going himself with the public prosecutor to place her in a convent safe from any further atrocity. The young lawyer besought his father to give him his best advice, if this persecution were the work of one of their friends. Though justice could not always punish, she would at last find everything out and make good note of it. Minoret had achieved his great end; he was now the immovable owner of the Château du Rouvre, one of the finest in all the Gâtinais, and he could derive forty odd thousand francs a year from the rich and beautiful land surrounding the park. The colossus could laugh at Goupil now. Moreover, he meant to live in the country, where the memory of Ursule would haunt him no more.

'My boy,' said he to Goupil, as they paced the terrace, 'leave my little cousin in peace!'

'Pooh!' said the clerk, who could make nothing of his capricious behaviour, for even stupidity has its depths.

'Oh, I am not ungrateful: you have helped me to get, for two hundred and eighty thousand francs, this fine mansion of brick and hewn stone, which certainly could not now be built for nearly five times the price, with the home farm, the park, the gardens, and timber —Well, yes, I will, on my word—I will give you ten per cent.—twenty thousand francs, with which you can buy a bailiff's practice at Nemours. And I guarantee your marriage with one of the Crémière girls—the elder.'

'The one who talked of the cornet-à-pistons?' cried Goupil.

'But her mother will give her thirty thousand francs,' said Minoret. 'You see, my boy, you were both to be a bailiff, just as I was made to be a postmaster, and we must all obey our vocation.'

'Very well,' said Goupil, fallen from his high hopes,

'here are the stamps; sign me bills for twenty thousand francs, that I may make my bargain cash in hand.'

Eighteen thousand francs were due to Minoret, the half-yearly interest on securities of which his wife knew nothing; he thought he should thus be rid of Goupil, and he signed the bills. Goupil, seeing this huge and stupid Machiavelli of the Rue des Bourgeois in a fit of seignorial fever, took leave of him with an 'Au revoir,' and a look that would have made any one but a parvenu simpleton tremble as he looked down from a high terrace on the gardens, and the handsome roof of a château built in the style fashionable under Louis XIII.

'You will not wait for me?' he cried to Goupil, seeing the clerk set out on foot.

'You can pick me up on the road, old man,' replied the prospective bailiff, thirsting for vengeance, and curious to know the answer to the riddle presented to his mind by the strangely tortuous conduct of this old man.

Ever since the day when the most infamous calumny had darkened her life, Ursule, a prey to one of those unaccountable maladies whose seat is in the soul, was hastening to the grave. Excessively pale, speaking rarely a few weak, slow words, looking about her with a gentle, indifferent gaze, everything in her appearance, even her brow, showed that she was possessed by a consuming thought. She believed that the ideal crown of pure flowers, with which in every age and nation the brow of a maiden has been supposed to be crowned, had fallen from hers. In the void and silence she seemed to hear the slanderous remarks, the malignant comments, the mean laughter of the little town. The burthen was too heavy for her; her innocence was too sensitive to endure such a stoning. She did not complain, a melancholy smile lay on her lips, and her eyes were constantly raised to Heaven as though to appeal to the Lord of Angels against the injustice of men.

When Goupil got back to Nemours, Ursule had been brought down from her room to the ground floor, leaning on the arm of La Bougival and of the doctor. This was in honour of a great event. Madame de Portenduère, having heard that the young girl was dying as the ermine dies, though her honour was less cruelly attacked than that of Clarissa Harlowe, had come to see her and to comfort her. The sight of her son, who had been talking all night of killing himself, had been too much for the old lady. Madame de Portenduère, indeed, found it quite becoming to her dignity to carry encouragement to so pure a creature, and regarded her own visit as an antidote to all the ill done by the gossips of the place. Her opinion, so much more influential, no doubt, than that of the vulgar, would consecrate the power of the nobility.

This step, announced by the Abbé Chaperon, had produced a revulsion in Ursule which revived the hopes of the physician, who had been in despair, and had talked of holding a consultation with the most eminent Paris doctors. Ursule had been placed in her old guardian's armchair, and the character of her beauty was such that in mourning and in suffering she looked more lovely than at any time in her happy days. When Savinien came in, with his mother on his arm, the young invalid's colour mounted to her cheeks once more.

'Do not rise, my dear,' said the old lady, in a tone of command. 'However ill and feeble I may be myself, I was determined to come and tell you what I think of all that is going on. I esteem you as the purest, saintliest, and sweetest girl in the Gâtinais, and regard you as worthy to make a gentleman of family happy.'

At first Ursule could make no reply; she held the withered hands of Savinien's mother, and kissed them, dropping tears upon them.

'Ah, Madame!' she answered, in a weak voice, 'I should never have been so bold as to think of raising

myself so far above my position if I had not been encouraged by promises, and my only claim was a love without limits; but means have been found to separate me for ever from him whom I love. I have been made unworthy of him.—Never!' she exclaimed, with a vehemence of tone that startled the listeners painfully —'never will I consent to give to any man a hand so vilified, a reputation so tarnished! I loved too well. . . . I may say it now, wreck that I am; I love a creature almost as much as God. And so God——'

'Come, come, child, do not calumniate God. Come, my daughter,' said the old lady, making a great effort, 'do not exaggerate the importance of an infamous jest which no one believes in. You shall live—I promise it —live and be happy.'

'You shall be happy!' cried Savinien, kneeling by Ursule, and kissing her hand. 'My mother calls you her daughter!'

'That will do,' said the doctor, who was feeling his patient's pulse. 'Do not kill her with joy.'

At this instant Goupil, who had found the gate into the alley ajar, pushed open the drawing-room door and showed his hideous face, beaming with the thoughts of revenge that had blossomed in his heart in the course of his walk.

'Monsieur de Portenduère,' said he, in a voice like the hiss of a viper at bay in its hole.

'What do you want?' said Savinien, rising.

'I want to say two words to you.'

Savinien went out into the passage, and Goupil led him into the yard.

'Swear to me by the life of Ursule whom you love, and by your honour as a gentleman which you prize, so to behave as though there were nothing known between us of what I am going to tell you, and I will explain to you the sole cause of the persecutions turned against Mademoiselle Mirouët.'

'Can I put an end to them?'

'Yes.'

'Can I be revenged?'

'Yes, on the prime mover—not on the instrument.'

'Why?'

'The instrument is——. I am the instrument.'

Savinien turned white.

'I just caught sight of Ursule——' the clerk began again.

'Ursule!' said Savinien, with a look at the clerk.

'Mademoiselle Mirouët,' said Goupil, made respectful by Savinien's tone; 'and I would shed all my blood to undo what has been done. I repent. If you were to kill me in a duel or in any other way, of what use would my blood be to you? Could you drink it? At this moment it would poison you.'

The man's cool reasonableness and his own curiosity quelled Savinien's boiling blood; he glared at this hunchback spoiled, with an eye that made Goupil look down.

'And who set you on the job?' asked the young man.

'You swear?'

'You wish to escape unharmed?'

'I wish that you and Mademoiselle Mirouët should forgive me.'

'She will forgive you.—I never will!'

'Well, you will forget?'

How terrible is the force of logic seconded by interest! Two men, each longing to rend the other, were standing there, close together, in a little yard, forced to speak to each other, united by one feeling in common.

'I will forgive you, but I shall not forget.'

'Of no use whatever,' said Goupil, coldly.

Savinien lost patience. He dealt the clerk a slap on the cheek that rang through the yard; it almost upset Goupil, and he himself staggered back.

'I have got no more than I deserve,' said Goupil. 'I

have been a fool. I thought you a finer fellow than you are. You have taken a mean advantage of the opportunity I offered you.—You are in my power now!' he added, with a flash of hatred at Savinien.

'You are a murderer!' exclaimed the gentleman.

'No more than the knife in the assassin's hand,' replied Goupil.

'I ask your forgiveness,' said Savinien.

'Are you sufficiently revenged?' said the clerk with savage irony. 'Will you now rest satisfied?'

'Forgive and forget on both sides,' replied Savinien.

'Your hand on it?' said Goupil, holding out his.

'Here it is,' said Savinien, swallowing the indignity out of love for Ursule. 'But speak: who was behind you?'

Goupil paused, considering the two dishes of the scale, so to speak, with Savinien's slap on one side, and on the other his hatred of Minoret. For two seconds he doubted; then a voice said to him: 'You can be a notary!' and he replied, 'Forgive and forget? Yes, on both sides, Monsieur,' and he clasped the gentleman's hand.

'Who is it, then, that is persecuting Ursule?' said Savinien.

'Minoret. He would like to see her dead and buried. Why, I do not know; but we will find out the reason. Do not mix me up in the matter. I can do nothing more for you if once I am suspected. Instead of attacking Ursule, I will defend her; instead of serving Minoret, I will try to spoil his game. I live only to ruin him, to crush him. And I will see him under my feet, I will dance on his dead body, I will make dominoes of his bones! To-morrow, on all the walls of Nemours, of Fontainebleau, of le Rouvre, the words shall be seen in red chalk—*Minoret is a thief!* Oh, I will do it, by all that is holy! I will blow him to the four winds! Now, we are allies by my having peached. Well, if you like, I will go on my knees to Mademoiselle Mirouët, and

tell her that I curse the insane passion which drove me to kill her. I will entreat her to forgive me. That will do her good. The Justice and the curé are there; those two witnesses are enough; but Monsieur Bongrand must pledge his word that he will not damage me in my career. For I have a career now.'

'Wait a moment,' replied Savinien, quite bewildered by this revelation.

'Ursule, my child,' said he, going back to the drawing-room, 'the cause of all your misery has lived to feel horror of his work; he repents, and would be glad to ask your pardon in the presence of these gentlemen, on condition that all shall be forgotten.'

'What! Goupil?' exclaimed the curé, the Justice, and the doctor in a breath.

'Keep his secret,' said Ursule, putting a finger on her lips.

Goupil heard her words, and saw the gesture, and it touched him.

'Mademoiselle,' he said, with feeling, 'I wish that all Nemours might hear me confess to you that a fatal passion turned my head, and suggested to me a series of crimes deserving the blame of all honest folks. What I have said I will repeat everywhere, deploring the evil result of my practical jokes, though they may, in fact, have hurried on your happiness,' he added, a little maliciously, as he rose, 'since I see Madame de Portenduère here.'

'That is right, Goupil,' said the curé; 'Mademoiselle forgives you. But do not forget that you have been very near committing murder.'

'Monsieur Bongrand,' Goupil went on, turning to the Justice, 'I am going this evening to try to bargain with Lecœur for his place as summonsing officer. I hope this confession will have done me no injury in your mind, and that you will support my candidature among the superior lawyers, and to the ministry.'

The Justice gravely bowed, and Goupil went off to

treat for the better of the two appointments in Nemours. The others remained with Ursule, and endeavoured that evening to restore calmness and peace in her mind, which was already relieved by the satisfaction given her by the clerk.

'All Nemours shall know it,' said Bongrand.

'You see, my child, God was not against you,' said the curé.

Minoret returned late from le Rouvre, and dined late. At about nine in the evening he was sitting in his Chinese pavilion digesting his dinner, his wife by his side, and laying plans with her for Désiré's future prospects. Désiré had quite settled down since he had held an appointment; he worked steadily, and had a good chance, it was said, of succeeding the public prosecutor of the district of Fontainebleau, who was to be promoted to Melun. They must find him a wife now, a girl wanting money, but belonging to some old and noble family; then he might rise to a judgeship in Paris. Possibly they might be able to get him elected député for Fontainebleau, where Zélie thought they would do well to settle for the winter, after spending the summer at le Rouvre. Minoret, very much pleased with himself for having arranged everything for the best, had ceased to think of Ursule at the very moment when the drama he had so clumsily begun had become so fatally complicated.

'Monsieur de Portenduère would like to speak to you,' said Cabirolle, coming in.

'Bring him here,' said Zélie.

The shades of dusk prevented Madame Minoret's seeing her husband suddenly turn pale; he shuddered as he heard Savinien's boots creak on the inlaid flooring of the passage, where the doctor's books had formerly lined the wall. A vague presentiment ran chill through the spoiler's veins.

Savinien came in. He stood still, keeping his hat on, his stick in his hand, his arms folded—motionless, face to face with the couple.

'I have come to know, Monsieur and Madame Minoret, the reasons which have led you to torture in the most infamous manner the young girl who is, to the knowledge of all Nemours, my future wife; why you have tried to brand her honour; why you wish her dead; and why you have abandoned her to the insults of such a creature as Goupil.—Answer.'

'What a queer notion, Monsieur Savinien,' said Zélie, 'to come and ask us our reasons for a thing which is to us inexplicable! I do not care for Ursule one snap. Since Uncle Minoret's death I have no more given her a thought than to an old smock! I have never breathed her name to Goupil—and a queer rascal he is, whom I would not trust with the interests of my dog.—Well, Minoret, why don't you answer? Are you going to let Monsieur attack you and accuse you of rascality that is beneath you? As if a man who has forty-eight thousand francs a year in landed estate round a château fit for a prince would demean himself to such folly! Wake up, man—sitting there like a dummy!'

'I don't know what Monsieur would be at,' said Minoret at last, in his thin voice, of which the clear accents betrayed its trembling. 'What reason could I have for persecuting the girl? I may have said to Goupil that it vexed me to know that she was in Nemours; my son Désiré had taken a fancy to her, and I would not have him marry her, that was all.'

'Goupil has confessed everything, Monsieur Minoret.'

There was a moment's silence—a terrible moment, while these three persons watched each other. Zélie had detected a nervous movement in the broad face of her colossus.

'Though you are but vermin, I intend to be publicly revenged on you,' the young nobleman went on. 'I

shall not ask satisfaction from you, a man of sixty-seven, for the insults heaped on Mademoiselle Mirouët; but from your son. The first time Monsieur Minoret, junior, sets foot in Nemours, we meet. He has got to fight me, and he shall fight! Or he shall be so utterly disgraced that he will not dare to show his face anywhere; if he does not come to Nemours, I will go to Fontainebleau! I will have satisfaction. It shall never be said that you have basely tried to bring shame on a defenceless girl.'

'But the calumnies of such a fellow as Goupil—really—are not——' said Minoret.

'Would you like me to confront you with him?' cried Savinien, interrupting him. 'Believe me, you had better not noise the matter; it is between you and Goupil and me; leave it so, and God will decide the issue in the duel to which I shall do your son the honour of challenging him.'

'But things cannot go on like that!' cried Zélie. 'What! Do you suppose that I shall allow Désiré to fight with you, a naval officer, whose business it is to use the sword and pistol! If you have a score against Minoret, here is Minoret; take Minoret, fight with Minoret! But why should my boy, who, by your own confession, is innocent of it all, suffer the penalty? I will set a dog of mine to hinder that, my fine gentleman!—Come, Minoret, there you sit gaping like a great idiot! You are in your own house, and you allow this young fellow to keep his hat on in your wife's presence! Now, young man, to begin with, take yourself off. Every man's house is his castle. I do not know what you are at with all your rhodomontade, but just turn on your heel; and if you lay a finger on Désiré, you will have me to settle with—you and your precious slut, Ursule.'

She rang violently, and called the servants.

'Remember what I have said,' repeated Savinien, who,

heedless of Zélie's diatribe, went away, leaving this sword of Damocles suspended over their heads.

'Now, Minoret, will you tell me the meaning of all this?' said Zélie to her husband. 'A young man does not come into a decent house and kick up all this tremendous dust for nothing, and insist on the blood of an only son and heir.'

'It is some trick of that nasty ape Goupil's; I had promised to help him to be made notary if he would get le Rouvre on reasonable terms. I gave him ten per cent., twenty thousand francs, in bills of exchange, and I suppose he is not satisfied.'

'Yes; but what previous reason can he have had to get up serenades and rascalities to trouble Ursule?'

'He wanted to marry her.'

'A girl without a sou? He? Fiddlesticks! Look here, Minoret, you are cramming me with nonsense, and you are by nature too stupid to make it take, my son. There is something behind it all, and you have got to tell it me.'

'There is nothing.'

'There is nothing? Well, I tell you that is a lie, and we shall see.'

'Will you leave me in peace?'

'I will turn on the tap of that barrel of poison, Goupil, whom you know, I think; and you will not get the best of the bargain then.'

'As you please.'

'Certainly, it will be as I please! And what I please, first and foremost, is that no one shall lay a finger on Désiré; if anything happens to him—there, I tell you, I should do something that would take me to the block. Désiré!—Why!—And there you sit without stirring!'

A quarrel thus begun between Minoret and his wife was not likely to end without long domestic broils. The thieving fool now found his struggle with himself and with Ursule made harder by his blundering, and com-

plicated by a fresh and terrible adversary. Next day, when he went out to go to Goupil, hoping to silence him with money, he read on all the walls: *Minoret is a thief!* Every one he met pitied him, and asked him who was at the bottom of this anonymous placarding, and every one overlooked the evasiveness of his replies by ascribing it to his stupidity. Simpletons gain more advantages from their weakness than clever men get from their strength. We look on at a great man struggling against fate, but we raise a fund for a bankrupt grocer. Do you know why? We feel superior when we protect an idiot, and are aggrieved at being no more than equal to the man of genius. A clever man would have been ruined if, like Minoret, he had stammered out preposterous replies with a scared look. Zélie and the servants effaced the libellous inscription wherever they saw it; but it weighed on Minoret's conscience.

Though Goupil had, only the day before, given the summonsing officer his word, he most audaciously refused now to sign the agreement.

'My dear Lecœur, you see I am in a position to buy Dionis' practice, and I can help you to sell yours to some one else. Put your agreement in your pocket again. It is the loss only of a couple of stamps. Here are seventy centimes.'

Lecœur was too much afraid of Goupil to make any complaints. All Nemours was forthwith informed that Minoret had offered his guarantee to Dionis to enable Goupil to purchase his place. The budding notary wrote to Savinien retracting all his confession regarding Minoret, and explaining to the young nobleman that his new position, the decisions of the Supreme Court, and his respect for justice forbade his fighting a duel. At the same time, he warned him to take care henceforth how he behaved, as he—Goupil—was practised in kicking, and at the first provocation would have the pleasure of breaking his leg.

The walls of Nemours spoke no more. But the quarrel between Minoret and his wife continued, and Savinien kept angry silence. Within ten days of these events the marriage of the elder Mademoiselle Massin to the future notary was publicly rumoured. Mademoiselle Massin had eighty thousand francs and her ugly face; Goupil, his misshapen body and his appointment; so the union seemed suitable and probable.

At midnight, as Goupil was quitting the Massins' house, he was seized in the street by two strangers, who thrashed him soundly and disappeared. Goupil never breathed a word about this nocturnal scene, and gave the lie to an old woman who, looking out of her window, fancied she had recognised him.

All these great little events were watched by the Justice, who clearly saw that Goupil had some mysterious power over Minoret, and promised himself that he would find out the reason of it.

Though public opinion in the little town acknowledged Ursule's perfect innocence, she recovered but slowly. In this state of physical prostration, which left her soul and mind free, she became the passive medium of certain phenomena of which the effects indeed were terrible, and of a nature to attract the attention of science, if science had only been taken into the secret. Ten days after Madame de Portenduère's visit, Ursule had a dream which presented the characteristics of a supernatural vision, as much in its moral facts as in its physical conditions, so to speak.

Her godfather, old Doctor Minoret, appeared to her, and signed to her to follow him; she dressed and went with him, through the darkness, as far as the house in the Rue des Bourgeois, where she found everything, to the most trivial details, just as they had been at the time of her godfather's death. The old man wore the clothes he had had on the day before he died; his face was pale,

not a sound was heard as he moved; nevertheless, Ursule distinctly heard his voice, though it was faint, as if repeated by a distant echo. The doctor led his ward into the Chinese pavilion, where he made her raise the marble top of the little Boule chiffonier, as she had done the day of his death; but instead of finding nothing there, she saw the letter her godfather had desired her to fetch. She unsealed it and read it, as well as the will in Savinien's favour.

'The letters of the writing,' she said to the curé, 'shone as though they had been traced with sunbeams; they scorched my eyes.'

When she looked up at her uncle to thank him, she saw a kindly smile on his pale lips. Then, in his weak but quite clear voice, the spectre showed her Minoret in the passage listening to his secret, unscrewing the lock, and taking the packet of papers. Then, with his right hand, he took hold of the girl and obliged her to walk with the tread of the dead to follow Minoret home to his house. Ursule crossed the town, went into the posting-house, and up to Zélie's room, where the spectre made her see the spoiler unsealing the letters, reading and burning them.

'He could only make the third match burn,' said Ursule, 'to set light to the papers, and he buried the ashes among the cinders. After that, my godfather took me back to our house, and I saw Monsieur Minoret-Levrault steal into the library, where he took, out of the third volume of the *Pandects*, the three bonds bearing twelve thousand francs a year, as well as the money saved in the house, all in bank notes. Then my guardian said to me: "All the torments that have brought you to the brink of the grave are his work, but God wills that you should be happy. You will not die yet; you will marry Savinien. If you love me, if you love Savinien, you will ask for the restoration of your fortune by my nephew. Swear that you will."'

Shining like the Lord at His Transfiguration, the spectre had had such a violent effect on Ursule's mind, in the oppressed state in which she was at the time, that she promised all her uncle asked her to be rid of the nightmare. She woke to find herself standing in the middle of her room, in front of the portrait of her godfather, which she had had brought there when she was ill. She went to bed again, and to sleep after great excitement, remembering this strange vision when she woke; but she dared not speak of it. Her refined good sense, and her delicacy of feeling, took offence at the thought of revealing a dream of which the cause and object were her own pecuniary interests; she naturally attributed it to La Bougival's chat, as she was going to sleep, of the doctor's liberality, and the convictions her old nurse still cherished on the subject.

But the dream returned with aggravated details, which made her dread it greatly. The second time her godfather laid his ice-cold hand on her shoulder, causing her the acutest pain, an indescribable sensation. 'The dead must be obeyed!' he said in sepulchral tones.

'And tears,' she added, 'fell from his hollow blank eyes.'

The third time the dead man took her by her long plaits of hair, and showed her Minoret talking with Goupil, and promising him money if he would take Ursule to Sens. Then she made up her mind to tell her three dreams to the Abbé Chaperon.

'Monsieur le Curé,' she said to him one evening, 'do you believe that the dead can walk?'

'My child, sacred history, profane history, modern history bear witness in many passages to their appearing. Still, the Church has never made it an article of faith; and as to science, in France it laughs it to scorn.'

'What do you believe?'

'The power of God, my child, is infinite.'

'Did my godfather ever speak to you of these things?'

'Yes; often. He had completely changed his views of such matters. His conversion dated from the day, as he told me twenty times, when a woman at Paris heard you, at Nemours, praying for him, and saw the red dot you had made on the calendar at the name of Saint Savinien.'

Ursule gave a scream that made the priest shudder; she remembered the scene when, on his return from Paris, her guardian had read her heart, and had taken away her calendar.

'If that is the case,' said she, 'my visions are possible. My godfather has appeared to me as Jesus appeared to His disciples. He stands in a golden light, and he speaks to me. I wanted to beg you to say a mass for the repose of his soul, and to beseech the interposition of God to stop these apparitions which overwhelm me.'

She then related her three dreams in every detail, insisting on the absolute truthfulness of the facts, the freedom of her own movements, and the clear vision of an inner self which, as she described it, followed the guidance of her uncle's spectre with perfect ease. What most surprised the priest, to whom Ursule's perfect veracity was well known, was her exact description of the room formerly occupied by Zélie Minoret at the posting-house, into which Ursule had never been, and which, indeed, she had never even heard mentioned.

'By what means can these strange apparitions be produced?' said Ursule. 'What did my godfather think?'

'Your godfather, my child, argued from hypotheses. He acknowledged the possible existence of a spiritual world, a world of ideas. If ideas are a creation proper to man, if they subsist and live a life peculiar to themselves, they must have forms imperceptible to our external senses but perceptible to our interior senses under certain conditions. Thus your godfather's ideas may enwrap you, and you perhaps have lent them his aspect. Then,

if Minoret has committed these actions, they are dissolved into ideas; for every action is the outcome of several ideas. Now, if ideas have their being in the spiritual world, your spirit may have been enabled to see them when transported thither. These phenomena are not more strange than those of memory; and those of memory are as surprising and as inexplicable as those of the perfume of plants, which are perhaps the plants' ideas.'

'Dear me! how you expand the world! But is it really possible to hear a dead man speak, to see him walk and act?'

'Swedenborg, in Sweden,' replied the Abbé, 'has proved to demonstration that he held intercourse with the dead. But, at any rate, come into the library, and in the life of the famous Duc de Montmorency, who was beheaded at Toulouse, and who certainly was not the man to invent a cock-and-bull story, you will read of an adventure almost like your own, which also occurred, above a hundred years before, to Cardan.'

Ursule and the curé went up to the first floor, and the good man found for her a little duodecimo edition, printed in Paris in 1666, of the *History of Henri de Montmorency*, written by a contemporary priest who had known that prince.

'Read,' said the curé, giving her the volume open at pages 175 and 176. 'Your godfather often read this passage; see, here are some grains of his snuff.'

'And he is no more!' said Ursule, taking the book to read this passage:—

'The siege of Privas was remarkable for the loss of some of the persons in command. Two colonels were killed: to wit, the Marquis d'Uxelles, who died of a wound received in the trenches, and the Marquis de Portes, by a gunshot in the head. He was to have been made Marshal of France the very day he was killed. Just about the moment when the Marquis died, the Duc

de Montmorency, who was sleeping in his tent, was roused by a voice like that of the Marquis, bidding him farewell. The love he had for one who was so near to him caused him to attribute the illusion of this dream to the power of his imagination; and the toil of the night, which he had spent as usual in the trenches, made him go to sleep again without any fear. But the same voice suddenly broke it again; and the phantom, which he had only seen in his sleep, compelled him to wake once more, and to hear distinctly the same words that it had spoken before disappearing. The Duc then recollected that one day when they had heard Pitrat the philosopher discoursing of the separation of the soul from the body, they had promised to bid each other farewell, whichever died first, if he were permitted. Whereupon, unable to hinder his dread of the truth of this warning, he at once sent one of his servants to the Marquis's lodgings, which were distant from his own. But before his man could return he was sent for by the King, who caused him to be told, by persons who could comfort him, of the misfortune he had already apprehended.

'I leave it to the learned to discuss the cause of this event, which I have often heard the Duc de Montmorency relate, and which I have thought worthy to be set down for its marvellousness and its truth.'

'But, then,' asked Ursule, 'what ought I to do?'

'My child,' said the curé, 'the case is so serious, and so much to your own advantage, that you must keep complete silence. Now that you have trusted me with the secret of this apparition, perhaps it will come no more. Besides, you are strong enough now to go to church; well, then, to-morrow you can come to thank God, and to pray for the peace of your godfather's soul. Be quite sure, at any rate, that your secret is in safe hands.'

'If you could know in what terror I go to sleep! What awful looks my godfather gives me! The last

time he held on to my dress to see me longer. I woke with my face streaming with tears.'

'Rest in peace; he will come no more,' said the curé.

Without losing a minute the Abbé Chaperon went to Minoret's house and begged him to grant him a minute's conversation in the Chinese pavilion, insisting that they must be alone.

'No one can hear us?' asked the priest.

'No one,' said Minoret.

'Monsieur, my character is known to you,' said the worthy priest, looking Minoret mildly but steadfastly in the face. 'I must speak to you of some serious, extraordinary matters, which concern you alone, and which you may rely on me to keep a profound secret; but it is impossible that I should not reveal them to you.—When your uncle was alive, there stood just there——' said the Abbé, pointing to the spot, 'a little chiffonier of Boule with a marble top' (Minoret turned pale), 'and under the marble slab your uncle placed a letter for his ward——'

The curé went on to tell Minoret the whole story of Minoret's conduct, without omitting the smallest detail. The retired postmaster, when he heard of the circumstance of the two matches which went out before burning up, felt his hair creep on his thick-set scalp.

'Who has invented such a cock-and-bull story?' he said in a husky voice, when the tale was finished.

'The dead man himself!'

This reply made Minoret shiver slightly, for he too saw the doctor in his dreams.

'God is most good to work miracles for me, Monsieur le Curé,' said Minoret, inspired by his peril to utter the only jest he ever perpetrated in his life.

'All that God does is natural,' replied the priest.

'Your phantasmagoria does not frighten me,' said the colossus, recovering his presence of mind a little.

'I have not come to frighten you, my dear sir, for I shall never speak of this to any living creature,' said the curé. 'You alone know the truth. It is a matter between you and God.'

'Come, now, Monsieur le Curé, do you believe me capable of such a breach of faith?'

'I believe in no crimes but those which are confessed to me, and of which the sinner repents,' said the priest in apostolic tones.

'A crime?' exclaimed Minoret.

'A crime, terrible in its results.'

'In what way?'

'In the fact that it evades human justice. The crimes which are not expiated here will be expiated in the other world. God Himself avenges the innocent.'

'You think that God troubles Himself about such trifles?'

'If He could not see all the worlds and every detail at a glance, as you hold a landscape in your eye, He would not be God.'

'Monsieur le Curé, do you give me your word of honour that you have heard all this story from no one but my uncle?'

'Your uncle has appeared three times to Ursule, to reiterate it. Worn out by these dreams, she confided these revelations to me, under the seal of secrecy; she herself regards them as so entirely irrational that she will never allude to them. So on that point you may be quite easy.'

'But I am quite easy on all points, Monsieur Chaperon.'

'I can but hope so,' said the old priest. 'Even if I should regard such warnings given in dreams as utterly absurd, I should still think it necessary to communicate them to you on account of the singularity of the details. You are a respectable man; and you have earned your fine fortune too legitimately to wish to add to it by robbery. You are, too, a very simple man; remorse

would torture you too cruelly. We have in ourselves an instinct of justice, in the civilised man as in the savage, which does not allow of our enjoying in peace anything we have acquired dishonestly according to the laws of the society we live in; for well-organised communities are modelled on the plan given to the universe by God Himself. In so far, society has a divine origin. Man does not evolve ideas, does not invent forms; he imitates the eternal relations he finds in all that surrounds him. Consequently, this is what happens: no criminal going to the scaffold with the full power of carrying out of the world the secret of his crimes, allows himself to be executed without making the confession to which he is urged by a mysterious impulse.—So, my dear Monsieur Minoret, if you are easy I may go away happy.'

Minoret was so dazed that he left the curé to let himself out. As soon as he was alone he flew into the rage of a full-blooded nature; he broke out in the wildest blasphemies, and called Ursule by every odious name.

'Why, what has she done to you?' asked his wife, who had come in on tiptoe after seeing the curé depart.

For the first and only time in his life, Minoret, drunk with fury and driven to extremities by his wife's persistent questioning, beat her so soundly that when she fell helpless he was obliged to lift her in his arms, and, very much ashamed of himself, to put her to bed.

He himself had a short fit of illness; the doctor was obliged to bleed him twice. When he was about again, every one, within a short time, noticed that he was altered. Minoret would take walks alone, and often wander about the streets like a man uneasy in his mind. He seemed absent-minded when spoken to—he, who had never had two ideas in his head. At last, one day, he addressed the Justice, in the High Street, as he was going, no doubt, to fetch Ursule to take her to Madame

de Portenduère's, where the whist parties had begun again.

'Monsieur Bongrand, I have something rather important to say to my cousin Ursule,' said he, taking the Justice by the arm, 'and I am glad that you should be present; you may give her some advice.'

They found Ursule at the piano; she rose with an air of cold dignity when she saw Minoret.

'Monsieur Minoret wishes to speak with you on business, my dear,' said the Justice. 'By the way, do not forget to give me your dividend warrants. I am going to Paris, and I will get your six months' interest, and La Bougival's.'

'Cousin,' said Minoret, 'our uncle had accustomed you to an easier life than you now enjoy.'

'It is possible to be very happy without much money,' said she.

'I have been thinking that money would help to make you happy,' replied Minoret, 'and I came to offer you some, out of respect for my uncle's memory.'

'You had a very natural course open to your respect for him,' said Ursule severely. 'You might have left his house just as it was, and have sold it to me, for you ran the price up so high only in the hope of finding treasure hoarded there——'

'At any rate,' said Minoret, evidently ill at ease, 'if you had twelve thousand francs a year, you would be in a position to marry the better.'

'I have not such an income.'

'But if I were to give it to you, on condition of your purchasing an estate in Brittany, in Madame de Portenduère's part of the country, she would then consent to your marrying her son?——'

'Monsieur Minoret, I have no right to so large a sum, and could not possibly accept it from you. We are scarcely related, and still less are we friends. I have suffered too much already from slander to wish to give any

cause for evil speaking. What have I done to deserve such a gift? On what pretext could you make me such a present? These questions, which I have a right to ask you, every one will answer in his own way. It will be interpreted as compensation for some injury, and I decline to recognise any. Your uncle did not bring me up in ignoble sentiments. We can accept gifts only from a friend. I could not feel any affection for you, and should necessarily prove ungrateful, so I do not choose to run the risk of such ingratitude.'

'You refuse!' exclaimed the colossus; the idea of anybody's refusing a fortune would never have entered his head.

'I refuse,' repeated Ursule.

'But on what grounds have you any claim to offer such a fortune to Mademoiselle?' asked the old lawyer. 'You have an idea; have you an idea?'

'Well, yes; the idea of getting her away from Nemours, that my son may leave me in peace; he is in love with her, and insists on marrying her.'

'Well, we will see about that,' replied the Justice, settling his spectacles. 'Give us time to reflect.'

He escorted Minoret home, quite approving his anxiety as to the future on Désiré's account, gently blaming Ursule's hasty decisiveness, and promising to make her listen to reason. As soon as Minoret was within doors, Bongrand went to the posting stables, borrowed a horse and gig, and hurried off to Fontainebleau, where he inquired for Désiré, and was informed that he was at an evening party at the sous-préfet's. The Justice, quite delighted, went on thither. Désiré was playing a rubber with the public prosecutor's wife, the wife of the sous-préfet, and the general of the regiment stationed there.

'I have come the bearer of good news,' said Monsieur Bongrand to Désiré. 'You are in love with Ursule Mirouët, and your father no longer objects to the marriage.'

'Ursule Mirouët! I am in love with her?' cried Désiré, laughing. 'What put Ursule Mirouët into your head? I remember seeing her occasionally at old Doctor Minoret's, my great grand-uncle, a little girl who is certainly lovely; but she is outrageously pious; and if I, like everybody else, did justice to her charms, I never troubled my head with caring for her washed-out complexion,' and he smiled at the lady of the house—a 'sprightly brunette,' to use a last century phrase. 'Where were you dug up, my dear Monsieur Bongrand? All the world knows that my father is sovereign lord over lands worth forty-eight thousand francs a year, lying round his Château du Rouvre, so all the world knows that I have forty-eight thousand perpetual and funded reasons for not caring for the ward of the law. If I were to marry a mere nobody, these ladies would think me a great fool.'

'You have never teased your father about Ursule?'

'Never.'

'You hear him, Monsieur,' said the Justice to the lawyer, who had been listening, and whom he now buttonholed in a corner, where they stood talking for about a quarter of an hour.

An hour later the Justice, having returned to Nemours and to Ursule's house, sent La Bougival to fetch Minoret, who came at once.

'Mademoiselle—' said Bongrand, as Minoret came in.

'Accepts?' Minoret put in, interrupting him.

'No, not yet,' replied the Justice, settling his spectacles. 'She had some scruples regarding your son's condition, for she had been very much ill used on the score of a similar passion, and knows the value of peace and quiet. Can you swear to her that your son is crazed with love, and that you have no object in view but that of preserving our dear Ursule from some fresh Goupilleries?'

'Oh yes, I swear it!' said Minoret.

'Stop a minute, Master Minoret!' said the Justice, taking one of his hands out of his trousers-pocket to slap Minoret on the back, making him start. 'Do not so lightly commit perjury.'

'Perjury!'

'It lies between you and your son, who, at Fontainebleau, at the sous-préfet's house, and in the presence of four persons and the public prosecutor of the district, has just sworn that he never once thought of his cousin Ursule Mirouët. You must therefore have had other reasons for offering her such an immense sum? I perceived that you were making very rash statements, and I have been to Fontainebleau myself.'

Minoret stood aghast at his own blunder.

'Still, there is no harm, Monsieur Bongrand, in offering to a young relative what will facilitate a marriage, which, as it would seem, will make her happy, and in seeking some excuse to overcome her modesty.'

Minoret, who in his extremity had hit on an almost admissible plea, wiped his brow, wet with large drops of sweat.

'You know my motives for refusing,' replied Ursule. 'I can but beg you to come here no more. Monsieur de Portenduère has not told me his reasons, but he has a eeling of contempt, even of hatred of you, which forbids me to receive you. My happiness is my whole fortune; I do not blush to own it; and I will do nothing to compromise it, for Monsieur de Portenduère is waiting only till I am of age to marry me.'

'The proverb, "Money is all-powerful," is very false!' said the huge, burly Minoret, looking at the Justice, whose observant eyes disturbed him greatly.

He rose and went away; but he found the air outside as oppressive as that in the little sitting-room.

'I must somehow put an end to this!' said he to himself as he got home.

'Now, your dividend warrant, my child,' said the

Justice, a good deal surprised at Ursule's calmness after so strange a scene.

When she returned with her own warrant and La Bougival's, Ursule found the Justice walking up and down the room.

'You have no idea what could have led to that huge lout's offer?' he asked her.

'None that I can tell you,' she replied.

Monsieur Bongrand looked at her in surprise—

'Then we both have the same notion,' he said. 'Here, make a note of the numbers of the two warrants, in case I should lose them; that is always a necessary precaution.' Bongrand himself noted on a card the numbers of the warrants.

'Goodbye, my child; I shall be away two days, but I shall be back on the third for my sitting.'

That night Ursule had a vision of a very strange character. It seemed to her that her bed was in the graveyard of Nemours, and that her uncle's grave was at the foot of the bed. The white stone on which she read the epitaph dazzled her eyes, and opened endways like the front cover of an album. She shrieked loudly, but the figure of the doctor slowly sat up. She first saw his yellow head and white hair, that shone as if surrounded by a halo. Under his bald forehead his eyes glittered like beams of light, and he rose as if drawn up by some superior force. Ursule trembled horribly in her bodily frame; her flesh felt like a burning garment; and, as she subsequently described it, there seemed to be another self moving within it.

'Mercy!' she cried, 'godfather!'

'Mercy?—It is too late,' he answered in the voice of the dead, to use the poor girl's inexplicable expression when she related this fresh dream to the Abbé Chaperon. 'He has been warned. He has paid no heed to the warning. His son's days are numbered. If he does not,

ere long, confess all and make full restitution, he will mourn his son, who is to perish by a horrible and violent death. Tell him this!' The spectre pointed to a row of figures, which flashed on the wall as if they had been written with fire, and said: 'That is his sentence!'

When her uncle had lain down in the grave again, Ursule heard the noise of the stone falling into place, and then, far away, a strange noise of horses, and men shouting.

Next day Ursule was prostrate. She could not get up, this dream had so overwrought her. She begged her old nurse to go at once to the Abbé Chaperon and bring him back with her. The good man came as soon as he had performed mass; but he was not at all astonished by Ursule's dream. He was convinced of the fact of the robbery, and no longer sought any explanation of the abnormal state of his 'little dreamer.' He left Ursule, and went straight to Minoret.

'Dear me, Monsieur le Curé,' said Zelie, 'my husband's temper is so spoilt, I don't know what is the matter with him. Until lately, he was a perfect child; but these two months past I hardly know him. That he should have got into such a rage as to strike me—me, when I am so gentle! The man must be completely and utterly altered. You will find him among the rocks; he spends his life there. What does he do there?'

In spite of the heat—it was September 1836—the priest crossed the canal, and turned up a pathway, where he saw Minoret sitting under a boulder.

'You are in some great trouble, Monsieur Minoret,' said the priest, appearing before the guilty man. 'You belong to me, you know, for you are unhappy. Unfortunately, I have come to add, perhaps, to your apprehensions. Ursule has just had a terrible dream. Your uncle lifted up his gravestone to prophesy misfortune to your family. I have not come to frighten you, believe me, but you ought to be told what he said——'



'Really, Monsieur le Curé, I cannot be left in peace anywhere, not even in this wilderness. I want to know nothing of what goes on in the next world.'

'I will leave you, Monsieur. I have not taken this walk in the heat for my own pleasure,' said the priest, wiping his brow.

'Well, then, what was it the old fellow said?' asked Minoret.

'You are threatened with the loss of your son. If your uncle could tell things which you alone knew, you must tremble at the things which we none of us know. Restitution, my dear sir, restitution! Do not lose your soul for a little gold.'

'Restitution of what?'

'Of the fortune the doctor intended for Ursule. You stole the three certificates; I now know it. You began by persecuting the poor girl, and you now end by offering her a dowry; you have fallen so low as lying; you are entangled in its mazes, and make a false step at every turn. You are yourself clumsy, and you have been badly served by your accomplice Goupil, who only laughs at you. Make haste, for you are being watched by clever and clear-sighted persons, Ursule's friends. Restitution! And even if you do not save your son, who may not be in any danger, you will save your own soul, and your honour. In a society constituted as ours is, in a little town where you all have your eyes on each other, and where what is not known is surely guessed, can you hope to hide an ill-gotten fortune? Come, my son, an innocent man would not have allowed me to say so much.'

'Go to the devil!' cried Minoret. 'I do not know what you are all at, setting on me. I like these stones better, for they leave me in peace.'

'Good-bye. You have been warned by me, my dear sir, without a soul in the world having heard a single word about the matter, either from me or from that poor

girl. But beware! There is a man who has his eye on you. God have mercy on you!'

The curé turned and left him. When he had gone a few steps, he looked back once more at Minoret. He was sitting with his head between his hands, for his head ached. Minoret was a little mad.

In the first place, he had kept the three certificates; he did not know what to do with them; he dared not present them himself; he was afraid lest he should be recognised; he did not wish to sell them, and was trying to hit on some way of transferring them. His day dreams were romances of business, of which the climax always was the transfer of those cursed certificates. In this dreadful predicament he thought, however, of confessing to his wife, so as to have some advice. Zélie, who had steered her own ship so well, would know how to get him out of this scrape.

Three per cents. were now quoted at eighty; thus, with arrears, the restitution in question would amount to nearly a million francs. Give up a million, without any proof against him that he had taken them!—This was no joke. And during the whole of September and part of October Minoret remained a prey to remorse and irresolution. To the amazement of the whole town, he grew thinner.

A fearful circumstance hastened the imparting of his secret to Zélie; the sword of Damocles swayed over their heads. Towards the middle of October Monsieur and Madame Minoret received the following letter from their son Désiré:—

'My dear Mother,—If I have not been to see you since the vacation, it is because, in the first place, I have been on duty in the absence of my chief, and also because I knew that Monsieur de Portenduère only awaited my going to Nemours to pick a quarrel with me. Tired, perhaps, of the long postponement of the revenge he is

anxious to take on our family, the Vicomte has been to Fontainebleau, where he appointed to meet one of his friends from Paris, after making sure of the assistance of the Vicomte de Soulanges, brigadier of the hussars quartered here.

'He called on me very politely, accompanied by these two gentlemen, and told me that my father was undoubtedly the originator of the infamous persecution directed against Ursule Mirouët, his future wife; he gave me proof by telling me that Goupil had confessed before witnesses, and by giving me an account of my father's conduct; he, it seems, after refusing at first to carry out his promises to Goupil as the price of his villainous devices, found the necessary funds for acquiring the place of summonsing officer at Nemours, and finally, out of fear, stood surety to Monsieur Dionis for the purchase of his practice, and so disposed of Goupil. The Vicomte, who cannot fight a man of sixty-seven, and who insists on avenging the insults heaped on Ursule, formally asked satisfaction of me. His purpose, thought out and determined on in silence, was not to be altered. If I should refuse to fight, he meant to meet me in a drawing-room in the presence of those persons whose opinion I most value, and there to insult me so grossly that either I must fight or my hopes in life be at an end. In France a coward is universally contemned. Moreover, his motives for demanding such reparation would be laid before me by gentlemen of honour.

'He was sorry, he said, to be driven to such extremities. In the opinion of his seconds, the wisest thing I could do would be to arrange a meeting, as men of honour are in the habit of doing, in such a way that Ursule's name should not appear in the matter. Finally, to avoid all scandal in France, we could, with our seconds, cross the frontier at the nearest point. Thus everything would be arranged for the best. His name, he said, was worth ten times my fortune, and his prospects of happiness were

a greater stake for him to risk than anything I could risk in this duel, which is to be fatal. He desired me to choose seconds and settle the matter. My seconds met his yesterday, and they unanimously decided that I owe him this reparation.

'In a week I set out for Geneva with two of my friends. Monsieur de Portenduère, Monsieur de Soulanges, and Monsieur de Trailles will go there their own way. We fight with pistols; all the details are arranged. Each is to fire three shots, and then, whatever may have come of it, the matter is at an end. To avoid all talk of such a dirty business—for I cannot possibly justify my father's conduct—I am writing to you only at the last minute. I will not go to see you on account of the violence you might display, which would be quite out of place. To make my way in the world I must obey its laws; and where a Vicomte finds ten reasons for a duel, the son of a postmaster must have a hundred. I shall pass through Nemours at night, and will there bid you good-bye.'

When they had read this letter, there was a scene between Zélie and Minoret, which ended in his confessing the theft, with all the circumstances connected with it, and the strange scenes to which it had everywhere given rise, even in the realm of dreams. The million had the same fascination for Zélie as it had for Minoret.

'Do you stay quietly here,' said Zélie, without the smallest reproach to her husband for his blundering; 'I will take the matter in hand. We will keep the money, and Désiré shall not fight.'

Madame Minoret put on her shawl and bonnet and hurried off to Ursule with her son's letter; she found her alone, for it was about twelve o'clock.

In spite of her audacity, Zélie Minoret was abashed by the girl's cold looks, but she scolded herself for her cowardice, and took an airy tone.

'Here, Mademoiselle Mirouët, have the kindness to

read this letter, and tell me what you think of it,' she exclaimed, holding out her son's letter.

Ursule felt a thousand conflicting emotions on reading this letter, which proved to her how deeply she was loved, and what care Savinien would take of the honour of the woman he was about to marry; but she was at once too pious and too charitable to desire to be the cause of death or suffering to her worst enemy.

'I promise you, Madame, that I will hinder this duel, and your mind may be easy; but I beg you to leave me the letter.'

'Let us see, my beauty, if we cannot do better than that. Listen to me. We have estates to the tune of forty-eight thousand a year round Le Rouvre, which is a real royal château; besides that we can give Désire twenty-four thousand francs a year in consols; seventy-two thousand francs a year in all. You will allow that there are not many matches to compare with him. You are an ambitious little puss—and you are very right,' added Zélie, noting Ursule's eager gesture of denial. 'I have come to ask your hand for Désiré; you will take your godfather's name—that will do it honour. Désiré, as you may have seen, is a good-looking young fellow; he is very much liked at Fontainebleau, and will soon be public prosecutor. You, who are such a coaxing charmer, will get him to Paris. At Paris we will give you a fine house; you will shine and play a part in society; for with seventy-two thousand francs a year and the salary of a good appointment, you and Désiré will be in the highest circles. Consult your friends; you will see what they say.'

'I need only consult my heart, Madame.'

'Pooh, pooh! Now you will be talking of that little lady-killer Savinien? Hang it all! you will pay very dear for his name, his little moustache twirled into two curly spikes, and his black hair. A pretty boy he is! A nice business you will make of housekeeping on seven

thousand francs a year, and a husband who ran into debt for a hundred thousand in two years in Paris. You don't know it yet, my child, but all men are alike ; and though I say it that shouldn't, my Désiré is every bit as good as a king's son.'

'You are forgetting, Madame, the danger that your son is in at this moment, which can only be averted by Monsieur de Portenduère's wish to oblige me. The danger would be quite inevitable if he should learn that you are making such a dishonouring proposal. I may assure you, Madame, that I shall be happier with the small income to which you allude than with the wealth you describe to dazzle me. For reasons unknown as yet—for everything will be known, Madame—Monsieur Minoret, by his odious persecution, has brought to light the affection which binds me to Monsieur de Portenduère, and which I may openly avow since his mother will give us her blessing ; I may tell you that this affection, now sanctioned and legitimate, is all I live for. No lot, however splendid, however elevated, would induce me to change. I love beyond all possibility of repentance or change. Hence it would be a crime, undoubtedly punished, if I were to marry a man to whom I could only bring a heart that is wholly Savinien's. And, indeed, Madame, since you drive me to it, I will say more : even if I did not love Monsieur de Portenduère, I could never make up my mind to go through the sorrows and joys of life as your son's companion. If Monsieur Savinien has been in debt, you have often paid Monsieur Désiré's. Our natures have neither the points of resemblance nor of difference which would allow of our living together without covert bitterness. I, perhaps, should not show him the tolerance that a woman owes to her husband ; I should therefore soon become a burthen to him. Think no more of a marriage of which I am unworthy, and which I may decline without causing you the smallest regret, since, with such advantages, you will not fail to

find plenty of girls handsomer than I am, of higher rank, and much richer.'

'Swear to me, child,' said Zélie, 'that you will prevent these two young men from taking their journey and fighting.'

'It will, I know, be the greatest sacrifice Monsieur de Portenduère can make for my sake. But my bridal wreath must not be claimed by blood-stained hands.'

'Very well, little cousin; I am much obliged to you, and I hope you may be happy.'

'And I, Madame, hope you may realise the promise of your son's future.'

This reply struck to the mother's heart; she remembered the predictions of Ursule's last dream; she stood up, her little eyes fixed on Ursule's face—so pale, pure, and fair in her half-mourning dress—for Ursule had risen, as a hint to her self-called cousin to leave.

'Then you believe in dreams?' asked Zélie.

'I suffer from them too much not to believe in them.'

'But then——' Zélie began.

'Good morning, Madame,' said Ursule, with a bow to Madame Minoret, as she heard the curé's step.

The Abbé Chaperon was surprised to find Madame Minoret with Ursule. The anxiety depicted on the retired postmistress's pinched and wrinkled face naturally led the priest to study the two women by turns.

'Do you believe in ghosts?' Zélie asked the curé.

'Do you believe in dividends?' replied the curé, smiling.

'Sharpers—all of them!' thought Zélie; 'they want to get round us. The old priest, the old Justice, and that rascally little Savinien have arranged it all. There are no more dreams in it than there are hairs in the palm of my hand.' She curtseyed twice with curt abruptness, and went away.

'I know why Savinien went to Fontainebleau,' said Ursule to the Abbé Chaperon, and she informed him

of the duel, begging him to use his influence to prevent it.

'And Madame Minoret proposed to you to marry her son?' asked the old man.

'Yes.'

'Minoret has probably confessed his crime to his wife,' added the curé.

The Justice, who came in at this moment, heard of the proceedings and the offer made by Zélie, whose hatred of Ursule was known to him, and he glanced at the curé as much as to say—'Come out; I want to speak to you about Ursule out of her hearing.'

'Savinien will hear that you have refused eighty thousand francs a year and the cock of the walk of Nemours!' he said.

'Is that any sacrifice?' answered she. 'Is anything a sacrifice to those who truly love? And is there any merit in my refusing the son of a man we despise? If others can make a virtue of their aversions, that should not be the moral code of a girl brought up by a Jordy, an Abbé Chaperon, and our dear doctor!' and she looked up at the portrait.

Bongrand took Ursule's hand and kissed it.

'Do you know,' said the Justice to the curé when they were in the street, 'what Madame Minoret came for?'

'What?' said the priest, looking at his friend with a keen eye that only revealed curiosity.

'She wanted to make a kind of restitution.'

'Then, do you think——?' began the Abbé Chaperon.

'I do not think, I am sure—here, only look.' The Justice pointed to Minoret, who was coming towards them on his way home, for on leaving Ursule's house the two friends had turned up the High Street.

'Having to plead in court, I have naturally studied many cases of remorse, but I never saw one to compare with this. What can have produced that flaccid pallor in cheeks of which the skin was as tight as a drum, burst-

ing with the coarse, rude health of a man without a care? What has set dark rings round those eyes, and deadened their rustic twinkle? Could you have believed that there would ever be a wrinkle on that brow, or that that colossus could ever have felt his brain reel? At last he is conscious of a heart! I know the phases of remorse, my dear Curé, as you know those of repentance. Those that have hitherto come under my observation were awaiting punishment, or condemned to endure it, to settle their score with the world; they were resigned, or breathed vengeance. But here we have remorse without expiation; remorse pure and simple, greedy of its prey, and rending it.—You are not yet aware,' said the Justice, stopping Minoret, 'that Mademoiselle Mirouët has just refused your son's hand?'

'But,' added the curé, 'you may be easy; she will prevent his duel with Monsieur de Portenduère.'

'Ah! my wife has been successful,' said Minoret; 'I am very glad. I was more dead than alive.'

'You are indeed so altered that you are not like yourself,' said the Justice.

Minoret looked from one to the other to see if the curé had betrayed him, but the Abbé preserved a fixity of countenance, a calm melancholy, that reassured the guilty man.

'And the change is all the more surprising,' the lawyer went on, 'because you ought to be perfectly happy. Why, here you are, lord of le Rouvre, to which you have added les Bordières, all your farms, your mills, your meadows. You have a hundred thousand francs a year in consols——'

'I hold no consols,' said Minoret, hastily.

'Bah!' said the Justice. 'Why, it is just the same with that as with your son's love for Ursule. One day he will have nothing to say to her, and the next asks her to marry him. After having tried to kill Ursule with misery, you want to have her for a daughter-in-law!

My dear sir, thcre is something at the bottom of all this!'

Minoret wanted to answer; he tried to find words; he could only bring out—

'You are funny, Monsieur le Juge de Paix.—Good-day, gentlemen.'

And he slowly turned down the Rue des Bourgeois.

'He has stolen our poor Ursule's fortune. But how can we prove it?'

'God grant——' said the curé.

'God has endowed us with a feeling which is now speaking in that man,' replied the Justice. 'But we call that presumptive evidence, and human justice requires something more.'

The Abbé Chaperon kept silence, as a priest. As happens in such cases, he thought much more often than he wished of the robbery Minoret had almost confessed, and of Savinien's happiness, so evidently delayed by Ursule's lack of fortune; for the old lady owned in secret to her spiritual director how wrong she had been not to consent to her son's marriage during the doctor's lifetime.

Next day, as he came down the altar steps after mass, he was struck by an idea, which came upon him with the force of a voice calling to him. He signed to Ursule to wait for him, and went home with her without breakfasting.

'My dear child,' said he, 'I want to see the two volumes in which your godfather, as you dream of him, says that he placed the certificates and notes.'

Ursule and the curé went upstairs to the library and took down the third volume of the *Pandects*. On opening it, the curé observed, not without surprise, the mark left by some papers on the pages, which, offering less resistance than the boards of the binding, still showed the impression made by the certificates; and in the other volume it was easy to see the readiness to open caused by

the long pressure of a packet of papers between two pages of the folio.

'Come in, come up!' cried the Abbé to the Justice, who was just passing the house.

Bongrand entered the room at the very moment when the priest was putting on his spectacles to read three numbers written by the dead doctor's hand on the coloured vellum-paper guard placed inside the boards by the binder, and which Ursule has just detected.

'What is the meaning of that? Our worthy friend was too great a book-lover to spoil the guard of a binding,' said the Abbé Chaperon; 'here are three numbers written between a first number, preceded by an M, and another preceded by an U.'

'What do you say?' cried Bongrand. 'Let me look at that.—Good God!' he exclaimed, 'is not this enough to open the eyes of an atheist, by proving to him the existence of Providence? Human justice is, I believe, the development of a divine idea brooding over the universe.'

He seized Ursule and kissed her on the forehead.

'Oh! my child, you shall be happy—rich—and through me!'

'What is it?' said the curé.

'My dear Monsieur!' cried La Bougival, taking the tail of the Justice's blue coat, 'let me embrace you for what you say.'

'But explain yourself,' said the curé, 'that we may not rejoice vainly.'

'If, in order to be rich, I must give anybody pain,' said Ursule, who had an inkling of a criminal trial, 'I——'

'But think,' said the lawyer, interrupting Ursule, 'of the happiness you will give our dear Savinien.'

'But you are mad!' said the curé.

'No, my dear Curé,' said Bongrand. 'Listen. Certificates of consols are numbered in as many series as there

are letters of the alphabet, and each number bears the letter of its series; but certificates to bearer cannot have any letter, since they are inscribed in no name. Hence, what you here see proves that, on the day when the good man placed his money in state securities, he made a note of the number of his certificate for fifteen thousand francs a year under the letter M—for Minoret; of the numbers of three certificates to bearer; and of that of Ursule Mirouët under the letter U, number 23,534, which, as you see, immediately follows that of the certificate for fifteen thousand francs. This coincidence proves that these numbers are those of five certificates acquired on the same day, and noted by the old man in case of loss. I had advised him to put Ursule's money into certificates to bearer, and he must have invested his own money, the money he intended for Ursule, and her little property all on the same day. I am now going to Dionis to look at the inventory. If the number of the certificate he left in his own name is 23,533, letter M, we may be certain that he invested through the same stockbroker, and on the same day: Firstly, his own money in one lump sum; secondly, his savings in three sums, in certificates to bearer; and thirdly, his ward's money; the register of transfer will afford irrefutable proof. Ah, Minoret the wisehead, I have got you! Mum 's the word, my friends!'

The Justice left the curé, Ursule, and La Bougival lost in admiration of the ways by which God brings innocence to happy issues.

'The finger of God is here!' cried the Abbé Chaperon.

'Will they do him any hurt?' asked Ursule.

'Oh, Mademoiselle,' cried La Bougival, 'I would give the rope to hang him with!'

The Justice was by this time at the house where Goupil was already the successor designate of Dionis, and went into the office with a careless air.

'I want a little information,' said he to Goupil, 'as to the estate of Doctor Minoret.'

'What is it?' asked Goupil.

'Did the old man leave one or more certificates of investment in three per cents.?'

'He left fifteen thousand francs of income in three per cents.,' said Goupil, 'in one certificate. I entered it myself.'

'Then just look in the inventory,' said the Justice.

'Goupil took down a box, turned over the contents, took out the document in question, looked through it, and read, 'Item, one certificate—there, read for yourself—number 23,533, letter M.'

'Be so kind as to hand over to me an extract of the particulars from the inventory before one o'clock. I will wait for it.'

'What can you want it for?' asked Goupil.

'Do you wish to become notary?' retorted the Justice, looking sternly at the expectant successor to Dionis.

'I should think so!' cried Goupil. 'I am sure I have eaten dirt enough to earn my title of *Maître*. I beg you to understand, Monsieur, that the wretched office clerk known as Goupil has no connection with *Maître* Jean-Sebastien-Marie Goupil, notary at Nemours, and husband to Mademoiselle Massin. The two men do not know each other; they are not even alike in any particular. Do you not see me?'

Monsieur Bongrand then remarked Goupil's dress. He wore a white stock, a shirt of dazzling whiteness with ruby studs, a red velvet waistcoat, a coat and trousers of fine black cloth and Paris make. He had neat boots, and his hair, carefully combed and smoothed, was elegantly scented. In short, he seemed to have been metamorphosed!

'You are, in fact, another man,' said Bongrand.

'Morally as well as physically, Monsieur. Wisdom

comes with work; and money is the fountain of cleansing——'

'Morally as well as physically?' said the Justice, settling his spectacles.

'Dear me, Monsieur, is a man with a hundred thousand crowns a year ever a democrat? Regard me as a respectable man, who has a taste for refinement, and for loving his wife,' he added, as Madame Goupil came in. 'I am so much altered,' said he, 'that I think my cousin Madame Crémière quite witty. I have taken her in hand; and even her daughter no longer talks about pistons. Why, only yesterday, in speaking of Monsieur Savinien's dog, she said he was making a point. Well, I did not repeat her blunder, though it is a funny one. I at once explained to her the difference between pointing, making a point, and standing at point. So, you see, I am quite another man, and would not allow a client to get into a mess.'

'Well, make haste then,' said Bongrand. 'Give me that copy within an hour, and Goupil, the notary, will have done something towards repairing the misdeeds of the clerk.'

After borrowing from the town doctor his cab and horse, the Justice went to fetch the two accusing folios, Ursule's certificate, and the extract from the inventory; armed with these, he drove to Fontainebleau to the public prosecutor there. Bongrand easily proved the abstraction of the three certificates to be the act of one or another of the heirs-at-law, and then demonstrated Minoret's guilt.

'It accounts for his conduct,' said the lawyer.

Then, as a measure of precaution, he stopped the transfer of the three certificates by a minute to the treasury, he desired Bongrand to ask what was the amount of interest due on the three certificates, and ascertain if they had been sold.

While the Justice went to do all this at Paris, the

public prosecutor wrote a polite note to Madame Minoret to beg her to come to the assize town. Zélie, anxious about her son's duel, dressed, had her own carriage out, and drove post-haste to Fontainebleau. The public prosecutor's scheme was simple but formidable. By separating the husband and wife, he felt sure of learning the truth as a result of the terrors of the law. Zélie found the magistrate in his private room, and was absolutely thunderstruck by this unceremonious speech—

'Madame, I do not imagine that you are an accomplice in a robbery made at the time of Doctor Minoret's death; justice is now on the traces, and you will save your husband from appearing at the bar by making a full confession of all you know about it. The punishment that threatens your husband is not, indeed, all you have to fear; you must try to save your son from degradation, and not cut his throat. In a few minutes it will be too late; the gendarmes are already on horseback, and the warrant for Minoret's apprehension will be sent to Nemours.'

Zélie fainted. When she came to herself, she confessed everything. After proving easily to this woman that she was an accomplice, the magistrate told her that, to avoid ruining her husband and son, he would proceed cautiously.

'You have had to deal with a man and not with a judge,' said he. 'There is no charge on the part of the victim, nor has the theft been made public; but your husband has committed dreadful crimes, Madame, which are usually tried before a tribunal less accommodating than I am. In the present circumstances of the case you will be obliged to remain prisoner.—Oh, in my house, and on parole,' he added, seeing Zélie ready to faint again. 'Remember that my strict duty would be to demand a warrant for your imprisonment, and institute an inquiry; however, I am acting at present as the legal guardian of Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët, and in her

interests, wisely understood, a compromise will be advisable.'

'Ah!' said Zélie.

'Write as follows to your husband.' And he dictated this letter to Zélie, who wrote it at his desk, with preposterously bad spelling:—

'My Dear,—I am arrested, and I have told all. Give up the certificates left by our uncle to Monsieur de Portenduère by virtue of the will you burned, for Monsieur the public prosecutor has stopped them at the Treasury.'

'By this means you will prevent his making denials, which would be his ruin,' said the lawyer, smiling at the spelling. 'We will see about having the restitution carried out in a proper manner. My wife will make your stay at my house as little unpleasant as possible; I advise you to say nothing to any one, and not to show your distress.'

As soon as his deputy's mother had confessed, and been placed in safety, the magistrate sent for Désiré, told him point by point the story of the robbery committed by his father, secretly to Ursule's detriment, evidently to that of the co-heirs, and showed him the letter his mother had written. Désiré immediately begged to be sent to Nemours, to see that his father made restitution.

'The whole case is very serious,' said his chief. 'The will having been destroyed, if the thing becomes known, the co-heirs, Massin and Crémière, your relations, may intervene. I have now sufficient evidence against your father. I give your mother back to you; this little ceremony has sufficiently enlightened her as to her duty. In her eyes I shall seem to have yielded to your entreaties in releasing her. Go to Nemours with her, and guide all these difficulties to a happy issue. Fear nobody. Monsieur Bongrand loves Mademoiselle Mirouët too well to commit any indiscretion.'

Zélie and Désiré set out at once for Nemours. Three hours after his deputy's departure, the public prosecutor

received by express messenger the following letter, of which the spelling is corrected, not to make an unhappy man ridiculous :—

'To the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Assizes at Fontainebleau.

'MONSIEUR,—

'God has not been so merciful to us as you have been, and an irreparable misfortune has fallen on us. On arriving at the bridge of Nemours, a strap came unfastened. My wife was at the back of the chaise without a servant ; the horses smelt the stable. My son, afraid of their restiveness, would not let the coachman get down, and got out himself to buckle it up. At the moment when he turned to get up again by his mother, the horses started off; Désiré did not make way quickly enough by squeezing back against the parapet, the iron step cut his legs; he fell, and the hind wheel went over his body. The messenger riding express to Paris to fetch the first surgeons will carry you this letter, which my son, in the midst of his suffering, desires me to write, to express to you our entire submission to your decisions in the business which was bringing him home.

'I shall be grateful to you till my latest breath, for the way in which you have proceeded, and will justify your confidence.

'FRANÇOIS MINORET.'

This terrible event upset the whole town of Nemours. The excited crowd that gathered round Minoret's gate showed Savinien that his revenge had been taken in hand by One more powerful than he. The young man went at once to Ursule, and the young girl and the curé alike felt more horror than surprise. The next day, after the first treatment, when the Paris doctors and surgeons had

given their advice, which was unanimous as to the necessity for amputating both legs, Minoret, pale, dejected, and heartbroken, came, accompanied by the curé, to Ursule's house, where he found Bongrand and Savinien.

'Mademoiselle,' said he, 'I am guilty towards you; but though all the ill I have done cannot be entirely repaired, some I can expiate. My wife and I have made up our minds to give you, as an absolute possession, our estate of le Rouvre if we preserve our son—as well as if we have the terrible grief of losing him.' As he ceased speaking, the man melted into tears.

'I may assure you, my dear Ursule,' said the curé, 'that you may and ought to accept a part of this gift.'

'Do you forgive us?' said the colossus humbly, and kneeling at the feet of the astonished girl. In a few hours the operation is to be performed by the first surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu; but I put no trust in human science; I believe in the omnipotence of God! If you forgive me, if you will go and ask God to preserve us our son, he will have strength to endure this torment, and we shall have the happiness of keeping him, I am sure of it.'

'Let us all go to the church!' said Ursule, rising. She no sooner was on her feet than she gave a piercing shriek, fell back in her chair, and fainted away. When she recovered her senses, she saw her friends, with the exception of Minoret, who had rushed off to find a doctor, all with their eyes fixed on her, anxiously expecting her to speak a word. That word filled every heart with horror.

'I saw my godfather at the door,' she said. 'He signed to me that there was no hope.'

And, in fact, the day after the operation, Désiré died, carried off by fever and the revulsion of the humours which follows on such operations. Madame Minoret, whose heart held no sentiment but that of motherhood, went mad after her son's funeral, and was taken by her husband to

the care of Doctor Blanche, where she died in January 1841.

Three months after these events, in January 1837, Ursule married Savinien, with Madame de Portenduère's consent. Minoret intervened at the signing of the contract to settle on Mademoiselle Mirouët, by deed of gift, his estate of le Rouvre, and twenty-eight thousand francs a year in consols, reserving of all his fortune only his uncle's house and six thousand francs a year. He is become the most charitable and pious man in Nemours, churchwarden of the parish, and the providence of the unfortunate.

'The poor have taken the place of my child,' he says.

If you have ever observed by the roadside, in districts where the oak is lopped low, some old tree, bleached, and, as it would seem, blasted, but still throwing out shoots, its sides riven, crying out for the axe, you will have an idea of the old postmaster, white-haired, bent, and lean, in whom the old folks of the district can trace nothing of the happy lout whom we saw watching for his son at the beginning of this tale; he no longer takes snuff in the same way even; he bears some burden besides his body. In short, it is perceptible in everything that the hand of God has been heavily laid on that form to make it a terrible example. After hating his uncle's ward so bitterly, this old man, like Doctor Minoret himself, has so set his affections on Ursule, that he is the self-constituted steward of her property at Nemours.

Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère spend five months of the year in Paris, where they have purchased a splendid house in the Faubourg St.-Germain. After bestowing her house at Nemours on the Sisters of Charity, to be used as a free school, Madame de Portenduère the elder went to live at le Rouvre, where La Bougival is the head gatekeeper. Cabirolle's father, formerly the guard of the 'Ducler,' a man of sixty, has married La Bougival, who owns twelve hundred francs a year

in consols, besides the comfortable profits of her place. Cabirolle's son is Monsieur de Portenduère's coachman.

When, in the Champs-Elysées, you see one of those neat little low carriages, known as *escargots* (or snail-shells), drive past, and admire a pretty fair woman leaning lightly against a young man, her face surrounded by a myriad of curls, like light foliage, and eyes like luminous periwinkle flowers, full of love—if you should feel the sting of envious wishes, remember that this handsome couple, the favourites of God, have paid in advance their tribute to the woes of life. These married lovers will probably be the Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife. There are not two such couples in Paris.

'It is the prettiest happiness I ever saw,' said the Comtesse d'Estorade, not long since.

So give those happy children your blessing instead of envying them, and try to find an Ursule Mirouët—a young girl brought up by three old men, and that best of mothers—Adversity.

Goupil, who is helpful to everybody, and justly regarded as the wittiest man in Nemours, is esteemed by the little town; but he is punished in his children, who are hideous, rickety, and hydrocephalous. His predecessor, Dionis, flourishes in the Chamber of Deputies, of which he is one of the greatest ornaments, to the great satisfaction of the King of the French, who sees Madame Dionis at every State ball. Madame Dionis relates to all the town of Nemours the particulars of her reception at the Tuileries, and the grandeurs of the King's Court. She is Queen at Nemours, by virtue of a King who is certainly popular in that sense.

Bongrand is President of the Court of Justice at Melun, his son on the high road to becoming a very respectable public prosecutor.

Madame Crémière still says the funniest things in the world. She writes tambour *tambourg*, and says it is because her pen splutters. On the eve of her daughter's

marriage, she told her, in concluding her advice to her, that a wife ought to be the toiling caterpillar of her home, and keep a sphinx's eye on everything. Indeed, Goupil is making a collection of his cousin's absurd blunders, a *Crémièriana.*

'We have had the grief of losing our good Abbé Chaperon this winter,' says the Vicomtesse de Portendùere, who nursed him during his illness. All the district attended his funeral. Nemours is fortunate, for this saintly man's successor is the venerable Curé de Saint-Lange.

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